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# LETTERS TO A YOUNG TEACHER.

BY GIDEON F. THAYER, A. M.,

PRINCIPAL OF CHAUNCEY HALL SCHOOL, BOSTON, FROM 1828 TO 1856.

[Reprinted from Barnard's American Journal of Education.]

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## CIRCULAR.

TO TEACHERS OF SCHOOLS OF EVERY GRADE AND KIND, AND PROMOTERS  
OF POPULAR EDUCATION GENERALLY.

DEAR SIR:

Boston, *Feb. 1, 1858.*

We take this method of calling your attention to HON. HENRY BARNARD'S "Quarterly Journal of Education," of which the eleventh number, the last but one of the fourth volume, has recently been published.

This Journal, in the two years since Mr. Barnard undertook it, has contained very important articles, in each of the several lines of subjects in which men are interested whose special attention has been called to any branch of Education. Its papers on College Education,—on Public School Education,—on specific branches of Study,—on the arrangements of Private Institutions,—on Legislation with regard to Education, and on those efforts in Education which look to the Reform of Juvenile Criminals; with a series of Biographical and Historical Papers of the first value,—show how wide is the field of the Editor's effort.

We believe that there is no other Journal of Education on a plan so comprehensive. Yet it is of such size that the discussions of each of the subjects which we have named are conducted in more detail by far than in any other Journal in America. A special department, devoted to Intelligence, puts in our possession an amount of detailed information which we can not command elsewhere.

Mr. Barnard has devoted his own time and other means to this valuable Journal, without stint or hesitation. It has not, however, been pressed upon the community with any of that pertinacity which often forces inferior works into circulation. We are sure that its wider circulation will be a great advantage to many private interests, and that it ought not to be a pecuniary burden to the Editor. We venture, therefore, to address this note to several gentlemen; hoping that we may materially enlarge the number of its subscribers.

The annual subscription is three dollars, the Journal being of page and type which give more reading matter than most of the Quarterly Reviews. The whole series together, make a connected work of the first value.

It is published by F. C. BROWNELL, Hartford.

We are, Sir,

Respectfully, your obedient servants,

EDWARD EVERETT.

JAMES WALKER.

HORACE MANN.

BARNAS SEARS.

GEORGE S. BOUTWELL.

ALONZO POTTER.

A. D. BACHE.

GEORGE B. EMERSON.

C. C. FELTON.

JOHN D. PHILBRICK.

JOHN KINGSBURY.

SAMUEL ELIOT.

EDWARD E. HALE.

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LETTER I.

INTRODUCTION.

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MR. EDITOR :—In quitting the position of a teacher, which I have occupied for over forty years, I find myself not wholly free from the feelings that induced the veteran retiring tallow chandler to solicit the privilege from his successor, of being allowed on *dipping days*, to go into the shop and lend a hand in the prosecution of his long accustomed craft. But presuming that such an arrangement might not be satisfactory to *my* successors in the school-room, I ask the privilege of contributing some of my notions on the subject of *school-keeping*, to the pages of your Journal.

I claim little originality of method in the processes I adopted, or in the details of my routine of labor, which the ardent and conscientious teacher would not, as a general thing, find to result from a long course of determined efforts in the management and instruction of a large school. Still, my younger brethren, however gifted by nature, and improved by education and the study of books, and even with the advantages which result from the Normal School—that blessed institution of modern days—an institution whose aid every individual, male or female, who intends to become a teacher, should if possible secure, cannot reasonably be supposed to anticipate all the variety of mental machinery which it is necessary to put in operation, to secure the results at which the educator should aim, in adopting as his regular vocation, this important department of human labor. He may have a love for imparting knowledge; he may be ambitious of writing his name on the roll of fame, side by side with those who by the common consent of civilized man, have made the world their debtors, by their successful efforts for the improvement of the race. Still, something more is requisite—is indispensable to the complete success at which every teacher should aim—should resolve on at the outset of his course.

It would be almost unpardonable, at this period of the world's history, to attempt to show the necessity of education, the value of

knowledge, the worth of sound principle, the advantages of self-control, the heaven-described requisition of "purity in the inward parts;" and all those subjects connected with the intellectual, moral, and social nature of man, which so properly enter into the school training of the youth of our country at the present time. This, therefore, is taken for granted; but, is it equally obvious that the young teacher has adopted this sentiment? Has made it the very basis of his action in the school-room? Has settled it in his resolution or purpose, that all these things are to be indissolubly connected with his plan of action? If he has not done this, his programme is essentially defective; and, if he has, the probability is that he will be aided to no inconsiderable extent, in the pursuit of his object, by the suggestions that experience may make, thus sparing him many a toilsome year of experiment, and saving his pupils from the disadvantages of inevitable failures, and, perhaps, from the infliction of unintentional injustice at his hands.

With these views, and for the satisfaction of still doing something in the way of instructing the race,—when I shall no longer be, Sir Walter Scott's "tyrant of childhood,"—I propose, by your permission, Mr. Editor, to furnish a few letters for successive numbers of your periodical, addressed to a young teacher, in the hope of aiding, indirectly, the youth of our country in their efforts to become what that country has a right to hope and expect from them, when they shall enter on the duties of adult life, and, in their turn, help to shape the destinies of their native land, and of the world.



## LETTER II.

### SELF-EXAMINATION AND SELF-DISCIPLINE.

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HAVING, in my opening letter, very briefly touched upon the general subject of school-keeping, I propose now to indicate more particularly what steps are to be taken to secure success in the objects at which you will aim. And, in my view, self-examination, self-discipline, self-government, self-renunciation, to a great extent, comprise the most obvious and certain means at your command. These will do more to promote the successful management of your school, than any set of rules, however well conceived or rigidly enforced.

To ascertain and explore the springs of action in one's own mind, is to obtain possession of the key that will unlock the minds of others; than which nothing is more important in the business you have undertaken; and nothing will give more effectual control over those intrusted to your care. And, as this is a leading object with the teacher, and one on which his usefulness mainly depends, it should be, first of all, secured. There are ten persons who fail in school-government, to one who fails in mere instruction. The extent of classical and scientific preparation is of little moment, where the capacity for government is deficient.

Self-examination, if faithfully carried out, will unfold to you natural biases and motives, of which you may now be wholly unaware. You may have been drifting forward on the stream of life, like a deserted ship on the bosom of a mighty river, heedless of your course, and trusting that the right haven would be found at last, without any special agency on your part to avoid the shoals and whirlpools, the obstructions and rocks, that lie exposed or hidden before you. You feel no "compunctious visitings" at this state of things; for you have never been roused to their contemplation. Your attention has never been called to an investigation of those ruling influences which, unknown to yourself, have hitherto led you onward in time's pathway.

You have felt no responsibility, for you have acted for yourself alone; and being, as you supposed, an exemplar or model to no other, have made no effort to alter your course.

The case is now wholly changed. What you are in motive, principle, habit, manners, will the pupils under your charge, to a greater

or less degree, become. There may be points exhibited by you before your school, which in *word* you steadily condemn ; but powerless and ineffective will be that precept which your example opposes with its living force. Hence the necessity of this personal inspection. "Know thyself" was the injunction of an ancient philosopher ; and it has been reiterated by many among the wise of modern days.

Most of those traits which make up what we call character in a man, are the results of education as developed not only by the processes of school instruction, but by whatever passes before the eye, whatever sounds upon the ear, excites the imagination, warms the heart, or moves the various passions within us ; and the more frequently the mind falls under the same set of influences, the greater the probability that the character will take a stamp conformably to such influences. Hence we perceive, although with some exceptions, a marked similarity in individuals of the same parentage. But there are traits inherent in the human constitution, and widely differing from each other, as strongly marked as the instincts of animals, which lead one species to seek the air, and another the water, without any teaching whatever.

The man of nervous temperament will exhibit conduct conformable to it ; the phlegmatic, to it. The acquisitive tendency produces the avaricious man ; the taciturn, the silent man. Although the operations of these original elements in our species can, perhaps, never be entirely reversed, they may, under faithful training, be so qualified as to make them subserve the cause of duty and humanity ; for we are never to admit that the great Creator made anything but for the promotion of the ultimate well-being of his creatures. As, on the completion of his six days' work, he saw that "it was very good," we are bound to believe that every element in man's nature, whether physical, moral, social, or intellectual, was intended to become the instrument of good in some department of the great system of things, however perversion or excessive indulgence may sometimes produce the very opposite effects. To say otherwise, would be like asserting that light is no blessing, because it may dazzle or blind the eye ; or that fire is a curse, because it sometimes consumes our dwellings or destroys our treasures ; or that water is our foe, because it may drown us.

It being established, then, that ours is a complex nature, and that, without an adequate knowledge of it, as existing in ourselves individually, we cannot do all in our sphere, of which we are capable, for the benefit of our fellow-beings, the acquisition of this knowledge becomes our first duty ; and, especially, when we put ourselves in a position to stamp an image of our spiritual selves upon those who are committed to our influence and our training.

Our first care, then, in this business of self-inspection, is to ascertain whether we have any tendencies or proclivities that militate with our highest idea of a perfect man ; whether our motives are lofty, our affections holy, our principles upright, our feelings and tastes pure, our intentions unselfish, our habits such as they should be. Every one has a beau ideal in his own mind ; and, if we fall below it in any of these particulars, we are to set about bringing ourselves up to the standard we have assumed.

In this great work we shall need aid beyond ourselves. In fact, self-love will be continually blinding us, or leading us astray from a strict and righteous judgment ; and, to enable us to be just, we must as constantly seek for aid where only it is to be found.

Having, then, ascertained the defects in our character, our next step is to impose that self-discipline which reformation requires. It may be difficult,—it doubtless will be ; but the result will be worth more than its cost. The work must be commenced in strong faith, with an unyielding will ; and a resolute perseverance will achieve the victory.

Have you doubts as to how you shall begin upon the new course ? Phrenology teaches that every organ has one antagonistic to it ; and that by exercising it, and suffering its opposite to lie dormant, the former will enlarge, and the latter shrivel for want of exercise. Take a hint from this. Have you discovered that your motives centre in self ? Seek every opportunity for benefiting others, even at some personal sacrifice. Have you found yourself indulging in any passion ? Cultivate a feeling of gentleness and forbearance. Put yourself in the way of meeting provocation, that you may learn, by practical experience, to resist the temptation to the evil. Have you detected a love of ease, or of inaction, or indolence ? Nerve yourself to a vigorous attack upon the propensity or *habit*, if it has already become such, assured that, if continued, it will prove fatal to every noble purpose. Have you accustomed yourself to speak ill of others, or encouraged slander or gossip in your associates ? Resolve to check it where you can, whether in the domestic circle, or abroad among strangers ; and resolve, as a *general* rule, to be silent where you cannot commend. If others are unjust to you, be forgiving and generous to them. If the cost or inconvenience be great, the discipline will be all the better and more useful. It is by such trials that the character is to be improved and perfected. It was not sleeping on beds of down that prepared the men of '76 to endure the unutterable hardships of those days ; but a long and severe training in the rigorous school of adversity and self-denial. It is the wielding of the heavy sledge that imparts vigor to the arm of the smith ; while the same brawny limb, confined in a sling, would soon wither into imbecility.

Thus, then, are you to treat propensities and habits, and every sin or defect, which you find besetting you or opposing your progress towards the standard you have set up for your own attainment.

A discipline like this terminates at last in that self-conquest so important in every situation of life, and is of unspeakable advantage to him who is the guide of the young in the beginning of their career.

The importance of self-government has been proverbial from the days of Solomon. It enables its possessor to make the best use of his powers under any circumstances that may arise. It decides the contest between two individuals, in other respects equal, declaring for him "who ruleth his own spirit." Nay, it comes, in lieu of intellectual power, in the dispute, and secures the victory to him who is in other respects the weaker man. It is highly useful in every sphere; and, in that of the teacher, is in requisition every hour of every day.

The last of these elements of preparation is self-renunciation, or self-sacrifice, a state of mind the most difficult to reach, and yet the noblest of all; for it was the leading characteristic in the Great Teacher—the purest, safest model for every other teacher.

You will, very naturally, in the outset of your pedagogical course, feel jealous of your authority and dignity, and require a deference and respect from your pupils, which, if withheld or rendered tardily, you may be disposed to resent or make the occasion of severe discipline to the offender. It is fitting that this point should not be neglected; but be not hasty to act or to adopt extreme measures in such a case. Assure yourself first that disrespect was *intended*. The low state of manners at this day is notorious. In many families, of good standing in the world, it is a subject that scarcely comes within the cognizance, or, apparently, the thought of parents. The children are not trained to observe the courtesies of civilized society, but actually grow up like the untutored savage of our western wilds. If any refinement exists around them, they are somewhat affected by it; but they do and speak as others—leading individuals in the families—do. Hence, many a noble-spirited boy enters the school-room practically unconscious of the claims of the teacher to any token of respect from him, that had never been required around the hearth-stone of his own home. Consequently, his manner may be rough, his tones loud and coarse, his language ill-chosen, his carriage clownish, even on his first introduction to the teacher. Should such a one come under your observation, judge him not hastily; check him not harshly. There may lie within that repulsive exterior the best elements of our nature; and he may be wholly unconscious that he has infringed any of the laws of civility. Ascertain, therefore, the facts in the case, before you arraign him for his delinquency.

Every variety of temperament, too, may be found among your pupils. The merry, the daring, the timid, the artful; one, so overrunning with fun and frolic, that he commits many a breach of good manners quite involuntarily; another, easily excited by passion, answers rudely, under its impulse, when, in his sober judgment, he would stand self-condemned, although his pride might forbid his acknowledging his fault.

Cases will be continually occurring to test the principle of self-sacrifice within you; and well will it be for your own happiness, and better still for your pupils, if you shall have so firmly established it, as to enable you to endure from them, for a time, what you would, perhaps, be disposed, if coming from others, to consider an insult.

But do not misunderstand me. I would have your pupils behave with strict propriety; would have you enforce it as a rule. My object in these remarks is to guard against precipitate action; nay, to prepare you to carry the martyr-spirit into your government, when the welfare of the children shall require it. The mother sometimes comes to her knees before her offending child. The spirit that dictates such an act should move the teacher in cases demanding it. Cases so extreme would rarely occur in school; but when they do happen, he should be prepared to meet them in this *maternal* spirit.

When the first Napoleon had an object to gain, whether it was the carrying of a bridge, the taking of a city, or the subduing of a kingdom, difficulties did not daunt him, nor the cost in men or treasure cause him to waver in his purpose. The only question was, "how many men will it cost?" and they were detached for the service. With a similar determination, but for a far nobler end, the teacher is to ask himself, "what amount of labor, what degree of personal sacrifice, will it require of me to save this child?" The question being solved, the generous effort is, with Bonapartean promptness, to be commenced. The debasing passion is subdued; the repulsive habit reformed; the evil tendency put in check,—and the boy is redeemed!

Do you ask me if *this* is the preparation for keeping school? I answer, the course I have recommended comprises the initiatory steps. They are the most necessary ones of all; first, because they involve the highest good of a human being; and, secondly, because they come not within the scope of the examination of school committees, either at the time the teacher receives his certificate of competency to take charge of a school, or at the public examinations, when he appears before the people, to prove or disprove the accuracy of the committee's written opinion.

I am well aware of the check that this perversion of the relative

value of things among School Committees, must have a tendency to impose on the ardor of a young teacher of high aims; and how great the danger to discouragement that he must have to encounter as he anticipates the non-appreciation of his acquirements in his school of self-discipline, among those who are to be his publicly constituted legal advisers or directors. Still, I cannot consent that he should lower his standard. If he adopts the teacher's vocation as a permanent one, these things will be needful to his complete success; and he should be ambitious, for the benefit he may confer on his pupils, as well as for his own fame, to leave such marks of his training and careful instruction on their feelings, habits, and principles, as will show to the good and wise that he measured his duty in the school-room by a standard more lofty, more grand, than that which is satisfied with a moderate acquaintance with grammar, geography, and arithmetic. These in their order. I would not derogate an iota from their true value; but I would have, without any compromise whatever, those things take the first place, on which the character, integrity, moral worth, and that happiness which springs from pure fountains, and which is alone worth striving for, depend.

The teacher who conscientiously believes this, and has made a faithful effort to fit himself to carry out the views presented in this letter, is worthy to mould the rising race,—to fit the embryo men to become voters under a free government, to become legislators capable of making wise laws, and upright magistrates to execute them.

Such teachers the republic emphatically needs. Such must be had, if we would perpetuate the glorious institutions of our Heaven-favored country. Prosperity in commerce, in wealth, in power, in fame, in population, is of little value, if there be not a foundation in something more substantial—more enduring; if, in short, public and private virtue be not the grand basis—"the stability of our land."

The foundation of all practical education must be in the department of morals; and this should be insisted on by all supervisors of schools throughout the land. Teachers should be examined in this as "the principal thing;" and, if found deficient, whatever their attainments in science, should be rejected. It is full time that some practical use should be made of the doctrine assented to by all, that the moral and social nature should be educated; and this can be best secured by engaging the services of persons who have made it a matter of particular attention.

### LETTER III.

#### MANNERS.

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BEFORE attempting to illustrate the principles laid down in my May letter, and show their application to the business of the school-room, I will devote one letter mainly to the subject of *manners*; a subject scarcely inferior in importance to that of *morals* themselves. *Morals* form the basis of human character; but *manners* are its decorations, and aids to its developments. *Morals* are the staple of human laws, the grand regulators (or should be) of human governments; *manners* are their gildings, which tend to soften their asperities, and win a more ready acquiescence in their observance. *Morals* are the solid bullion, forming the foundation of the currency of a community; *manners*, the small notes or coins, ever ready for use, and without which the business intercourse of mankind must cease, or retrograde to the condition of things that existed in the world's infancy. In fine, *morals* are the sun behind a cloud, which, though giving light to the world, lacks the genial force of its shining face; *manners* are the agencies that displace the cloud, and reveal the glorious orb in all its original power.

We hence perceive an intimate connection between the two. Neither is complete in itself. One is the complement of the other. They should not be separated. *Morals* divorced from *manners*, would be cold and repulsive; united to them, they become attractive and pleasing. While *manners*, unassociated with *morals*, degenerate into hypocrisy—furnishing an illustration of the “whited sepulchre” of the New Testament.

Let it be understood, then, that in speaking of *manners*, *civility*, *courtesy*, or *politeness*,—for I shall use them synonymously,—I allude to them as having a right foundation, and as belonging to moral duty. They give a charm to social intercourse, which nothing else can supply. This is a fact universally admitted; and yet one that seems to be less practised upon, in each succeeding year of our nation's history.

It was once a sufficient guaranty for gentlemanly *manners*, that the individual had been reared by respectable parents. This is now by no means a conclusive inference. Family training, in many instances,—

perhaps in a majority,—has fallen into disuse; and chance, or the will of the young, has taken its place. The respect always due to parents, to seniors in age, to superiors in station, in wisdom, and virtue, has so nearly died out in this country, as to have undermined the very foundation of that for which I am pleading. For, if from those whose claims are of a paramount nature, the ordinary civilities of refined life are withheld, it is in vain to expect they will be extended to the stranger, encountered in the marts of business, the walks of pleasure, or the rounds of general intercourse.

An apostle, in writing to a young friend, says, in speaking of children, “let them learn to show piety at home,”—meaning *duty to parents, or those in superior relation*. Here, then, *at home*, is where the sentiment is to take root, be nurtured, and made to grow. Its influence will then go forth with the young, controlling their behavior towards others, and checking that rudeness which has become a reproach to our country among the more civilized nations of the earth.

Since, then, this duty has come to be so much neglected by those on whom it naturally devolves, the teacher is to exercise double diligence in its inculcation. And, although it may be very discouraging, especially at the outset of your teaching, to think that, you work single-handed, let me entreat you to take courage; to assure you that, in most cases, your efforts will be appreciated and seconded at the homes of the pupils. It is not that fathers and mothers do not *wish* to have their children grow up, adorned with the graces, as well as imbued with the good morals, properly belonging to a Christian community: they are very glad to have this boon bestowed upon them; but the pursuit of business—the accumulation of wealth—engrosses the father's attention, absorbs his time, and leaves him no leisure for the home instruction of his children. The mother may do what she can, but without her husband's coöperation, her best endeavors are often neutralized. When, however, she finds the work begun at school, she is eager in assisting the teacher to carry out his plans. Ascertaining what they are, she strives to enforce them when the children are in her presence, and each aids the other in the good work.

But how are the details in this training to be carried into practice? To answer this, involves numerous particulars. To teach penmanship well, a man must write well himself; to make good readers, he must read well; to make good mathematicians, he must understand well the subject. “As is the teacher, so is the school.” The aim and effort of the man, who would impress the stamp of the Christian gentleman upon the manners, habits, and character, of each one of his pupils, must be to *deserve that appellation himself!* In proportion



as he merits this, will he succeed in multiplying the copies of so desirable a work.

Let us now ascertain the elements of genuine politeness. The counterfeit we should eschew as we would a spurious bank-note. It can have no connection with morals; and it is politeness, as coadjutor with morals, which it is our purpose to encourage and promote.

Politeness, or good manners, then, we consider as the offspring of benevolence, love, or kindness of heart. Its aim is to make others happy; to smooth down the rough edges and sharp points to be met in our collisions with society, and thus to prevent that friction from human intercourse which is inevitable without the exercise of this meliorating grace. From the uncouth bearing of many individuals, it may be deemed impossible, in their cases, to add or develop this grace; and it is admitted that the task will not be a light one. But there is a germ of the "raw material" in every human soul; and the business of the educator is to unfold, to form, and direct it. This will be difficult or easy, according to the temperament of the respective subjects; but, be assured, it is invariably attainable, although not in equal degrees. Every one may be taught, by proper attention and needful skill, to write well; but no human power can make elegant penmen of all. Some have an innate incapacity for the perfection of the art. So it is with forming the manners. Still, this should furnish no excuse for omitting the attempt. The effort is all the more necessary. When Lowell Mason, nearly thirty years ago, introduced instruction in vocal music into the school with which I was then connected, in trying the voices of the pupils, he discovered that some possessed very limited vocal power—capable of sounding no more than three notes of the scale; but he did not turn them aside, saying,—as had been the practice with his predecessors in teaching the art,—that "they had no voice, and could never make singers;" no; he said, wisely, that they needed instruction and training so much the more, that their natural deficiencies might be, to some extent, counteracted; and the result proved the soundness of his judgment. In six months they had nearly doubled their power, and could sound, some five, some six notes.

Some persons are, apparently, *born* ladies or gentlemen, and require little or no direction from others. Some, with an intuitive faculty of imitation, take on the most agreeable and finished manners, from being surrounded by suitable examples. Others, of an easy and good-natured temperament, float on under its influence, securing the good will of their associates, quite unconsciously and without effort.

But a large majority of children, at the school-going age, are (to borrow Addison's idea) like the marble in the quarry, and need the hand of the polisher to develop their latent capabilities.

Impressed, then, with these truths, I would say to you, my young brother, let the Courtesy of the Heart distinguish your whole deportment—when instructing a class, as well as when in private conversation with their parents or others; at home and abroad; in your own study, and at the public exhibition. Have not one code of manners for the fireside or the school-room, and another for company; excepting in the degrees of deference which different ages and stations demand. These are recognized and claimed by the hand-book of our divine religion. Never lose your self-respect, your good language, your temper, nor your philanthropy. To do either of these would undo the beneficial effect of a long course of verbal instruction.

Many young men, at college and elsewhere, away from the restraining and refining influence of the gentler sex, acquire ungainly habits, which they afterwards continue to practise, perhaps unconsciously, even when they have become teachers,—such as throwing the chair back and causing it to rest on its two hind legs; putting the feet, raised breast-high, on the desk or form in the school-room; cutting and scraping the nails in company, &c., very much to the scandal of the profession, and highly derogatory to the delinquents. I need not say how ill-bred, how disgusting such habits are.

Few persons, of ordinary reflection, need be in doubt on any point of good or ill breeding. When a common instinct or sense of propriety fails to settle the point in your mind, the example of the individual among your acquaintance, of acknowledged taste and refinement, may be relied on as a safe guide.

Although conventional usage fixes a certain standard of civility for its own observance in almost every country, there are certain laws of courtesy, that are universal among civilized nations: one of which is, to avoid doing whatever may offend the taste, delicacy, or feelings, of the company in which we are. Another, to do what will contribute to the happiness, pleasure, or innocent enjoyment of one's associates. A third, to waive, for another's comfort, any little gratification to ourselves. He who is not prepared to adopt, for his own guidance, these fundamental rules of genuine politeness, will fail to rise to any considerable eminence among the truly polite, and must present to others but a poor model for their imitation.

There is a *prestige* in the very bearing of a man of genuine good-breeding, which every one feels on entering his presence. I remem-

ber to have heard an illustration of this, many years ago. Governor Everett, of Massachusetts, widely known as an accomplished gentleman, frequently visited a primary school in the city of Boston, when every pupil evinced, by his deportment, that he *felt* the influence of the Governor's courteous manners, even before he spoke; and on one occasion a little pupil said to the teacher, after he had withdrawn, "Miss Brown, I always feel just as if I must keep bowing, when that gentleman comes into school."

It has been said, and often written as a copy-slip, for the last fifty years or more, that "Amiable manners adorn correct morals." And that "A man's manners form his fortune." They do more: before we have ascertained whether a man possess *any* morals or not, his manners have already made an impression on our minds and feelings. Stranger though he be to us, our opinion of him is formed, either of favor, indifference, or dislike. We may do him injustice. He may be repulsive in his exterior, and yet a man of sterling merit; while, on the other hand, with all the graceful externals of a gentleman, he may be a knave. There is no infallible rule in the case. One thing, however, is certain: he is not more likely to be unworthy for being agreeable; and his manners are always considered as a recommendation. They are like well-known coins of acknowledged value, current at every counter; while stern integrity, destitute of external grace, like bills of exchange without an endorser, are slow to be accepted. *Time* usually does all men justice; but before some individuals have, by a long course of good conduct, proved to others their real worth, the tide in their affairs which leads to fortune has begun to ebb, and the flood may not again return.

Further. Good manners are not merely a selfish good: they please and gratify others. They generate confidence and allay irritated feeling. The mother, how ill-regulated soever her own children may be, points to those of her neighbor, who are well-bred, as patterns for their imitation; while the man of self-discipline, struck by their charm, endeavors to reproduce them in his own demeanor.

The manifestations of good manners, in the many trifling particulars which they involve, are so insignificant, individually considered, as to almost forbid their introduction into this letter; but as it may fall under the eye of some of those who are to be *ultimately*, if not *directly*, benefited by the views herein presented, I will venture—though with some misgivings—to present a specimen.

The *bow*, among most of the civilized nations of the world, is a common token of respect and courtesy, although it is sometimes used

merely as a sign of recognition among familiar acquaintances. In the rural portions of our own country, it is considered a synonyme for *manners*, in boys, as is courtesy, in girls; and the good dame says to her sons, on the entrance of a visitor, "Make your manners, children." It formerly was, also, a synonyme for *reverence* in the same connection.

It has been spoken of as one of the most potent ceremonies current among men; and truly it may not, in its consequences, be easily over-rated. It is an act whose significance every one comprehends, and secures, at sight, the compliment it deserves. Nay, it is not too much to say, that to a well-timed and graceful bow, many a lad has been indebted for his position and distinction among men; and it will ever continue to be so, as long as civility is appreciated by mankind, and this continues to be one of its acknowledged expressions.

Perhaps this is founded on a principle in the human mind, that may be deemed selfish—the bow being a manifestation of respect or courtesy to the individual receiving the salutation; or it may be a feeling of gratification that the youth is thus entering for himself on a course that will conduct him to respectability and honor. Whatever the cause, the effect is certain; and it were to be wished that the efforts of teachers might lead to a more general observance of the practice in question.

Macklin, in his *Man of the World*, makes Sir Pertinax speak of it as the very pledge of thrift; acknowledging that *his* success in life had been owing, almost exclusively, to the omnipotent "boo," as he gave it. While our own Franklin encourages a similar idea, in his lessons to young men, on success in the world. And Shakspeare, by Hamlet, introduces the same thought in his speech, where he says,

"And crook the pregnant hinges of the knee,  
Where thrift may follow fawning."

But if it were observed as a hollow ceremony alone, to secure goodwill and lay the foundation of fortune, I should consider it contemptible, and unworthy a young, frank, and generous mind. O, teach not the unsophisticated beings under your care, anything so foreign to the purposes of your holy office!

I wish to speak of it in a simpler and a better sense—merely as an expression of politeness or deference. And, however obsolete it may have become with a portion of our young people, I say, *let it be revived*—especially at school; on entering or leaving, on receiving or giving anything. Let it, also, be observed at home, in the street, in company; wherever, in short, personal communication is held with others, or another, by word or action. To ladies, to teachers, to gen-

tle men in advanced life, let the hat be lifted wholly from the head ; with others, a touching of the hat will suffice, or—if on perfectly familiar terms with the person saluted—the touching of the hat may be omitted.

These distinctions should not be forgotten. A few specimens of the “good old English gentleman” and of the well-bred men of our own country of the Washington stamp, yet survive, who exemplify the grandeur and gracefulness of this style of manners. Would there were more, and that we could arrest the rapid decadence of their practice !

There is no one thing, in itself so trivial, that would tend more powerfully to arrest the tide of rudeness that is sweeping over our land, and carrying our character for respectability away with it, than the reëstablishment of this ancient token of good breeding.

Along with this, I would insist on the addenda of *sir* and *ma'am* (or madam), in conversation with persons to whom they properly belong. An observance of this is indispensable to the preservation of the various grades and classes of persons in their appropriate spheres. I am not speaking of *castes* in our community,—I repudiate the idea, —but of those divisions marked by nature itself, so necessary to be preserved, and on which the permanent welfare of our people, in a great measure, depends.

These two ceremonies restored and continued in use among us, would reintroduce a class of individuals into our community, which once formed a most interesting connecting link between childhood and youth or early manhood, but which, of late years, has followed in the track of the “lost arts”—boyhood and girlhood having been practically expunged from the natural series or stages of life !

It is a failing to observe the injunction, “not to think more highly of himself than one ought to think,” that has foisted upon us this evil. Rushing to secure the best seats at a public table, appropriating to self the most desirable accommodations in a public vehicle, smoking in presence of others, without ascertaining whether agreeable to the company or not—and even when ladies are present:—these are some of the natural consequences of the new *civilization*. Wearing the hat in the house, engrossing the conversation in company, sitting while their elders are standing, impatience or greediness at table, appropriating personally some delicacy intended as a compliment to a guest or honored friend present, omitting those little attentions and courtesies, which give such an indescribable charm to the social meal, —which are all found in the well-bred man's code of *table manners*,—are among the minor fruits of the system of “Young America.”

These things should be noted, deprecated, and corrected. By making them subjects of specific instruction in school, you will confer a lasting and important benefit on the community among whom you labor, while you make your own intercourse with the young a source of continually-increasing satisfaction to yourself.

The countenance of the teacher should wear a benign, or, at least, a calm aspect, that it may not contradict the gentle or courteous language he uses in his intercourse with his school. The salutations at meeting in the morning, and the adieus at parting, should, always when practicable, be practised by the teacher. They tell on the heart not less than on the manners of the young. Compare the families of those where this practice is regarded, with those where it is neglected. I need no other advocate than this comparison, for its observance, among all of even moderate discrimination. The contrast presented, is attraction and repulsion; beauty and deformity; refinement and barbarism.

Politeness is not only for all times, but for all persons; is not to be wholly neglected in the intercourse even of school-children. Some liberties may very properly be indulged in among them, as familiar acquaintances, but these must have their limits; and such intimacies will be profitable or injurious in proportion as this direction is observed or disregarded.

In the conjugal relation, too, particular attention should be given to it; nor do I consider the remark out of place here, although the object of these letters is to reach the young of the school-going age, through the agency of the teacher. Cicero would have boys taught at school those things which they are to practise as men. The rule applies to youth of both sexes; and when a life-union shall be formed between any two of them,—I care not how much of love or admiration they mutually feel,—there must subsist a sufficient degree of reciprocal respect to secure a courteous demeanor, or affection itself will die out. Let the young cherish this idea, if they would realize, in the future, their previous dreams of connubial happiness.

Servants have a claim to our civility, and it has become proverbial that the true gentleman is known, when away from home, by his deportment to this class of persons.

I have, in these remarks, adverted principally to the *boys* under your charge; but, as far as they are applicable to the other sex, I would have them applied with the utmost stringency. More delicate and refined by nature, there is less occasion for such lessons to them. Still, all coarseness in a girl or young woman is a thousand times more repulsive than when exhibited by one of our own sex.—There is

one point that I may not pass over here. I have spoken of the self-forgetfulness to be practised, and the small personal sacrifices to be made to others, particularly to ladies and elderly persons, in travelling; and I grant that, with comparatively few exceptions, among those who travel much, there is little room for complaint against those who consider themselves gentlemen; and this offers an encouragement to the teacher, that those whom he is now striving to mould, may, as they assume their place among men, present a just claim to that title. The point that I wish to introduce here is this: Throughout New England, such a degree of deference is usually extended to Woman, that there are individuals of the sex who *claim*, with no doubtful expression, certain privileges from our sex, which every right-minded man will be always ready most cheerfully to yield, but which he is not so willing to surrender at command. In our lecture-rooms, in public travelling conveyances, there is an essential difference in the quality or convenience of the seats. A man appropriates a large amount of time, in going early, that he may secure the wished-for accommodation. One of the other sex comes in, an hour afterwards, it may be, and expects that he will surrender the seat to her at discretion. He does so; but, instead of acknowledging his civility by word or look, she looks upon him with a countenance full of indignation or offended dignity, most emphatically expressing the idea, "You are very impertinent to keep me standing so long in the aisle!"

Every day, gentlemen give up desirable seats in railroad cars, and stand till a vacancy occurs; or take an outside seat in an omnibus, to accommodate a lady within, while a toss of the head, indicating impatience that they did not make the movement more readily, is the only return for the civility! Now, I would have boys taught to practise the very extreme of courtesy—to forego the better for the poorer accommodation, in favor of a lady; but it is the bounden duty of the recipient to express, in civil terms, her appreciation of the kindness in such case. This, therefore, is the lesson I would have taught to the girls—or those that occupy the place that girls *formerly* held in schools—by the learning and practising of which only, they can expect to secure their prerogative, or prove themselves worthy the kind consideration of man. Let it be remembered that she has no *legal* claim to this advantage; that its surrender is a free-will offering on the altar of politeness; that, therefore, the return—the simplest and most obvious on her part—can be nothing short of a courteous word of thanks or acknowledgment, endorsed by a kindly expression of countenance. By this, the civility of the man is felt by him to be

fully repaid, and he has hence every encouragement to persevere in his agreeable duty.

I am aware there are numerous exceptions to this mode of receiving these trifling favors; that there exist many examples of all that is elegant in manners, charming in expression, and fascinating in tone, among our accomplished women; but still a false notion prevails with so many others, as to render it important to present the matter as I have done to your attention.

There are few positions in life which furnish so many opportunities for the exercise of good breeding, as travelling. Innumerable occasions occur for removing petty annoyances, promoting the comfort, and adding to the satisfaction of others, which the amiable voyager will not fail to notice and embrace, exciting fellow-travellers to similar acts, increasing the sum of human enjoyment, and proving an authentic claim to the title of a true gentleman.

The late Daniel Webster was remarkable for this; and numerous are the anecdotes related of him illustrative of the fact. Persons familiar with the routes between the seat of government and Boston, during the last thirty or forty years, can state how often the tedium of the journey has been enlivened and charmed by the genuine politeness of the great statesman. Every man cannot be a Webster; but no one is destitute of the ability to be civil and kind, whenever the disposition exists. There is a wide difference in men in regard to refinement of feeling and sensibility to the wants and claims of others; and on this will ever depend complete success in the art of being agreeable, and of ministering to the wants and comforts of fellow-beings.

This, therefore, claims your especial attention. A training in the minute particulars, which perfect and constant good manners involve, should form a part of the labors of every hour while you are in the presence of your pupils; and this to be persevered in to the close of life's toils. The mark which you will thus assist to impress on the successive classes of your school, will be ineffaceable, and continue a glorious monument to your fidelity, long after your mortal part shall have been committed to the tomb, and the undying spirit shall be transferred to the immediate presence, and be beatified by the benignant and unfading smile, of Infinite Love.



## LETTER IV.

### HABITS.

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TEACHERS, like men of all other vocations, are subject to human infirmities; although, in judging them, this consideration is often overlooked. Hence, the increased importance of that self-control which has already been urged on your attention. In our own days, as well as in those of Goldsmith, it is a melancholy fact that the state of mind in which a teacher enters his school-room, and begins the duties of the day, is but too often the foretoking of the day's occurrences;

"As coming events cast their shadows before."

O, furnish no just cause to have it said of you,

"Well had the boding tremblers learned to trace  
The day's disasters in his morning face."

Let your habits be regular. I mean as to your diet, amount of sleep, exercise, &c. Your temper of mind, your feelings, your nervous system, will depend essentially on this; and these will affect your school-room operations. Some persons, with iron constitutions, are able, for a time, to live recklessly, and yet escape the immediate infliction of the legitimate penalties. They are, however, in their cases, only postponed: *their sin will find them out*. But, with few exceptions, school-teachers have not the bodily vigor to withstand the effects of irregularities of living. They either enter on the profession before the muscular system is hardened into maturity, or, under a confinement to which they had not been accustomed, they usually impair the strength they brought to it, and thus quicken into life those infirmities so fatal to success. I am not speaking of habits of a criminal nature; but of those to which worthy, moral young men, from inconsideration, are very apt to become addicted—and this, as they think, in a good cause. For example: they feel a deficiency of knowledge in some science they are required to teach, or they wish to pursue their investigations in some favorite study; and, aware that the quiet hours of night are most favorable to their purpose, they

draw on those hours to such an unreasonable amount, as to leave but a very inadequate portion to meet the claims of the drowsy god; which claims can never be met but in kind—no substitute being, by Nature's unyielding laws, ever admitted. This, then, is the first and great requisition—a liberal amount of sleep, and taken as regularly as practicable. Any degree of knowledge, procured at the sacrifice of needful sleep, is too dearly purchased; especially by him whose days are to be devoted to the instruction and training of the young.

Many persons have tried the experiment of living without sleep, or of showing with how small a portion they could live; but, if they have not died under the trial, they have so impaired their physical powers as to have made the latter part of their lives a burden—full of ails and of nervous annoyances.

It is true, that Napoleon, while in his career of conquest, dashing like a meteor over half of vanquished Europe, lived for months together with but a very few hours of sleep in the twenty-four; and, during a large part of his time, in the saddle. But he was a man of extraordinary vigor of body as well as of mind; possessed an indomitable will, and a fixedness of purpose that knew no aspect but success. Reared in the camp, proof against exposure to the elements and to hardship, he was a model that few could successfully emulate; and, by no means, a suitable one for your fraternity.

Next to sleep, I would speak of food; a liberal supply of which, and that of a nutritious character, I deem indispensable to health and usefulness. I am aware that opinions differ on this point; but experience and observation prove the affirmative of it. The well-considered laws of health, founded upon the structure and natural desires of a human being, testify to it. I say a *liberal* supply; I do not mean a quantity unreasonable in amount or variety. I repudiate the idea of excess. Gluttony may claim as many victims as Intemperance. There is a rational course, which every one who carefully considers the subject may easily ascertain. Let it but be deemed of sufficient importance to secure attention to it, and the evil will be avoided.

On this point, I speak from feeling as well as from conviction. I had, associated with me in school, for eight years, one of the best men, and most successful teachers, that it has been my fortune to know. It was CLEMENT DURGIN; and I am glad of this opportunity of placing his name on record, where it may meet the eyes of his many friends, in connection with a slight tribute to his memory and his worth. It should have been done long ago, by an abler pen: it could not have been performed by a warmer friend.

Mr. Durgin was a self-educated man, and he did the service well. He far more nearly verified the common remark of school-boys, "He knows everything," than many of those who are distinguished by college honors of the first, second, or even third *dégré*. He was a universal student; not of printed books merely, but of the great book of Nature—not sealed to him, but ever open, and read with understanding and perpetual delight. The pebble, the tiny wild-flower, the buzzing insect, the downy moss, the magnificent tree, the singing bird,—all created things, animate and inanimate, were subjects of his contemplation, and furnished him with lessons which enriched his school instructions, while they attuned his mind to harmony and love. Always equable and self-possessed, he seemed to have imbibed the influence of the Source of kindness, the Giver of all wisdom. He was devoted to Natural Science, and to all science, not only from their intrinsic attraction, but from a laudable ambition to *be* something, and to *do* something, in the world. His lectures and addresses, orations and poems,—for he was no mean poet,—evinced knowledge, judgment, patriotism, and taste, of which many young men would have been proud. Patient of labor, and willing to oblige, he was called on to devote many an hour, after his day's school-toil was over, to the preparation of literary performances for lyceums, anniversary occasions, temperance societies, national holidays, &c., to which he always cordially responded, and which he successfully performed.

These proved a fatal temptation to him. Unwilling to present anything not worthy of himself and the occasion, or that should fall below the anticipations of his friends, he bestowed much care and time upon them, and these at the expense of needful rest and bodily exercise, crowning his error with abstinence from suitable food. Having an idea that his intellect was clearer when but little food was in the stomach, he indulged sparingly in eating, and abandoned the use of solid animal food altogether—taking, instead, vegetables, fruit, and pastry, with a little milk. For a short time, he found he could write with more facility and readiness; but nature soon revolted, demanding a supply of nourishment which his newly-assumed diet did not furnish, and which was needed all the more from his accumulated mental labors. This demand was not complied with, or acceded to too late; and he fell into a decline, from which no curative treatment could restore him, and died of rapid consumption, a few months after, at the early age of thirty-one years—a victim to too rigid a system of dietetics, and too small an allowance of sleep and bodily exercise. And yet, so far as man could judge, with the capacity of fulfilling the three-score and ten years assigned as the lifetime of a human being.

His ashes repose amid the quiet shades of Mount Auburn, the trustees having accorded a small triangular lot for the purpose; and on the tablet of his monument is inscribed the following epitaph:

"Clement Durgin, associate principal of Chauncy-Hall School, Boston. Born, Sept. 29, 1802; died, Sept. 30, 1833: a student and lover of nature, in her wonders, he saw and acknowledged, and through them adored her beneficent Author. His life was a beautiful illustration of his philosophy; his death, of the triumph of his faith.

"His pupils have reared this monument, as an imperfect memorial of their grateful affection and respect."

The loss of a life so valuable to myself, to the profession, and to the community, I have unceasingly mourned; and cannot but cherish the hope, that others, influenced by similar tendencies to his, will take warning from this melancholy example, and be just to the claims of their physical nature, as well as to the aspirations of the nobler part; remembering that man is a complex being, and that to neglect the wants of either of the two principal elements is certain eventually to destroy or impair the power of both.

I have here, incidentally, introduced the subject of exercise; but wish to say a word more upon it, and particularly on the mode of taking it. Exercise derived from swinging dumb-bells in your chamber, or from splitting wood in a cellar, is of but little use. It will quicken the flow of the blood, and, consequently, warm the system; but more than this should be aimed at, that the mind may also have a share in the benefit sought for. Choose a place, then, if you can, where the scenery is attractive, and the objects are such as to make you forget yourself, and the reason of your being abroad. If you are favored with a locality that furnishes a water view, seek that, and you will not want for incidents of interest. If, instead, you have hills, or mountains, or forests, they will furnish you with agreeable subjects for reflection, and tend to call you out of yourself, and away from the petty cares of the school-room, or the gossip of the village—a matter of no inconsiderable importance. That sleep is sweetest and most refreshing, which is taken with the mind in a quiet state, destitute of cares or disturbing thoughts, which generate unquiet dreams: so exercise, enjoyed without the intrusion of distracting thoughts, or of objects foreign to the scene around, is not only most agreeable and recuperative, but that alone which is worth the having.

Exercise should, if possible, be taken in the daytime, in the broad sunlight. Everything that grows needs this. The esculent that sprouts in your cellar has no vigor, no greenness, no flavor; it needs the air and the sunshine to give it these. Fishes that are found in the

pools of caves, where the beams of the sun never smile, are destitute of eyesight. It is the light and warmth of the sun that cheer, embellish, and bless. Make it a point, therefore, that your exercise may be truly useful to you, to take it, as here indicated, under circumstances as advantageous as possible; but be sure, at all events, to secure daily a needful amount of it.

Attention to these suggestions will do more than anything else within your ability to present you, each day, to your responsible charge with that preparation so indispensable to complete success.

In the opening chapter of Ernest Linwood, the last work of my lamented and highly-gifted friend, MRS. CAROLINE LEE HENTZ, a description of a school scene, in the early days of the heroine of the book, is given, so true to life, and to the practices in the schools of forty or fifty years back, that I hope I shall be pardoned for transcribing a portion of it. If it be objected that this is a work of fiction, my reply is, that such scenes were formerly common in our schools; and, I grieve to say, are not wholly obsolete at the present day.

"With an incident of my childhood," begins the book, "I will commence the record of my life. It stands out in bold prominence, rugged and bleak, through the haze of memory.

"I was only twelve years old. He might have spoken less harshly. He might have remembered and pitied my youth and sensitiveness, that tall, powerful, hitherto kind man,—my preceptor, and, as I believed, my friend. Listen to what he did say, in the presence of the whole school of boys, as well as girls, assembled on that day to hear the weekly exercises read, written on subjects which the master had given us the previous week.

"One by one, we were called up to the platform, where he sat enthroned in all the majesty of the Olympian King-god. One by one, the manuscripts were read by their youthful authors; the criticisms uttered, which marked them with honor or shame; gliding figures passed each other, going and returning, while a hasty exchange of glances betrayed the flash of triumph, or the gloom of disappointment.

"'Gabriella Lyun!' The name sounded like thunder in my ears. I rose, trembling, blushing, feeling as if every pair of eyes in the hall were burning like red-hot balls on my face. I tried to move, but my feet were glued to the floor.

"'Gabriella Lyun!'

"The tone was louder, more commanding, and I dared not resist the mandate. The greater fear conquered the less. With a desperate

effort I walked, or rather rushed, up the steps, the paper fluttering in my hand, as if blown upon by a strong wind.

“‘A little less haste would be more decorous, miss.’

“The shadow of a pair of beetling brows rolled darkly over me. Had I stood beneath an overhanging cliff, with the ocean waves dashing at my feet, I could not have felt more awe or dread. A mist settled on my eyes.

“‘Read!’ cried the master, waving his ferula with a commanding gesture,—‘our time is precious.’

“I opened my lips, but no sound issued from my paralyzed tongue. With a feeling of horror, which the intensely diffident can understand, and only they, I turned, and was about to fly to my seat, when a large, strong hand pressed its weight upon my shoulder, and arrested my flight.

“‘Stay where you are!’ exclaimed Mr. Regulus. ‘Have I not lectured you a hundred times on this preposterous shamefacedness of yours? Am I a Draco with laws written in blood, a tyrant scourging with an iron rod, that you thus shrink and tremble before me? Read, or suffer the penalty due to disobedience and waywardness.’

“Thus threatened, I did read,—one stanza. I could not go on, though the scaffold were the doom of my silence.

“‘What foolery is this? Give it to me!’

“The paper was pulled from my clinging fingers. Clearing his throat with a loud and prolonged hem, then giving a flourish of his ruler on the desk, he read, in a tone of withering derision, the warm breathings of a child’s heart and soul, struggling after immortality,—the spirit and trembling utterance of long-cherished, long-imprisoned yearnings.

“Now, when, after years of reflection, I look back on that never-to-be-forgotten moment, I can form a true estimate of the poem subjected to that fiery ordeal, I wonder the paper did not scorch and shrivel up like a burning scroll. It did not deserve ridicule. The thoughts were fresh and glowing, the measure correct, the versification melodious. It was the genuine offspring of a young imagination, urged by the ‘strong necessity’ of giving utterance to its bright idealities—the sighings of a heart looking beyond its lowly and lonely destiny. Ah! Mr. Regulus, you were cruel then.

“Methinks I see him, hear him now, weighing in the iron scales of criticism every springing, winged idea, cutting and slashing the words till it seemed to me they dropped blood, then glancing from me to the living rows of benches, with such a cold, sarcastic smile!

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"Had I received encouragement instead of rebuke, praise instead of ridicule,—had he taken me by the hand and spoken some such kindly words as these :

" 'This is very well for a little girl like you. Lift up that down-cast face, nor blush and tremble as if detected in a guilty act. You must not spend too much time in the reveries of imagination, for this is a working-day world, my child. Even the birds have to build their nests, and the coral insect is a mighty laborer. The gift of song is sweet, and may be made an instrument of the Creator's glory. The first notes of the lark are feeble, compared to his heaven-high strains. The fainter dawn precedes the risen day.'

"O ! had he addressed me in indulgent words as these, who knows but that, like burning Sappho, I might have sung as well as loved ?

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"I remember very well what the master said, instead of the imagined words I have written.

" 'Poetry, is it?—or something you meant to be called by that name? Nonsense, child !—folly, moonbeam hallucination ! Child, do you know that this is an unpardonable waste of time ? Do you remember that opportunities of improvement are given you to enable you hereafter to secure an honorable independence ? This accounts for your reveries over the black-board, your indifference to mathematics, that grand and glorious science ! Poetry !—ha ! ha ! I began to think you did not understand the use of capitals,—ha ! ha !'

"Did you ever imagine how a tender loaf of bread must feel when cut into slices by the sharpened knife ?—how the young bark feels when the iron wedge is driven through it with cleaving force ? I think I can, by the experience of that hour. I stood with quivering lip, burning cheek, and panting breast, my eyes riveted on the paper, which he flourished in his left hand, pointing *at* it with the fore-finger of his right.

" 'He shall not go on !' said I to myself, exasperation giving me boldness ; 'he shall not read what I have written of my mother ! I will die sooner ! He may insult *my* poverty, but hers shall be sacred, and her sorrows too !'

"I sprang forward, forgetting everything in the fear of hearing *her* name associated with derision, and attempted to get possession of the manuscript. A fly might as well attempt to wring the trunk of the elephant.

" 'Really, little poetess, you are getting bold ! I should like to see you try that again ! You had better keep quiet !'

"A resolute glance of the keen, black eye,—resolute, yet twinkling

with secret merriment,—and he was about to commence another stanza.

“I jumped up with the leap of the panther. I could not loosen his strong grasp, but I tore the paper from round his fingers, ran down the steps through the rows of desks and benches, without looking to the right or left, and flew, without bonnet or covering, out into the broad sunlight and open air.

“‘Come back, this moment!’

“The thundering voice of the master rolled after me like a heavy stone, threatening to crush me as it rolled. I bounded on before it, with constantly accelerated speed.

“Go back—never!

“I said this to myself. I repeated it aloud to the breeze that came coolly and soothingly through the green boughs, to fan the burning cheeks of the fugitive. At length, the dread of pursuit subsiding, I slackened my steps, and cast a furtive glance behind me. The cupola of the academy gleamed white through the oak trees that surrounded it, and above them the glittering vane, fashioned in the form of a giant pen, seemed writing on the azure page of heaven.

“I cast myself, panting, on the turf, and, turning my face downward instead of upward, clasped my hands over it, and the hot tears gushed in scalding streams through my fingers, till the pillow of earth was all wet as with a shower.”

In the sequel of this story, the child is forgiven, and the teacher confesses that he had been unkind, pleading that he “had been previously much chafed, and, as is too often the case, the irritation caused by the offences of many,” as he said, “burst forth on one, perhaps the most innocent of all.”

Here, then, is the lesson of this letter. Strive to adopt such a course of life as will enable you to keep the feelings and passions under control. Avoid all occasions of angry excitement; and endeavor, on entering your school-room, to leave spleen behind, lest it be vented on the innocent, and you yourself suffer the mortification and regret of being unjust to those you are bound to protect, to guide, and love.

The illustrations I have given, both from fact and fiction, unite in enforcing the same idea. They both show the sad consequences of a mistaken course, on the actor and on those interested in or connected with him.

Other lives are yet to be sacrificed under similar impulses, and other teachers to lose their character and their dignity, when they yield the reins to impatient emotion.



## LETTER V.

### PUNCTUALITY.

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I MAY seem to you to have lingered unnecessarily long in the field of moral preparation for the work you have before you; but I am, continually, more and more convinced that the highest objects of school education are to be secured by reflecting upon this element in your vocation, and fixing the principles and indicating the plans of action to be adopted when entering on the scene of actual labor.

This letter I propose to devote to the consideration of some miscellaneous points, in pursuance of the idea above suggested; and, in my next, to take up some one of the subjects of specific school study.

In my September letter, I condemned the course of Mr. Regulus, not only because he lost his self-control, but because he employed sarcasm and irony in his discipline; and this, too, to a sensitive young girl. These should never be used in school government. They wound the heart of sensibility deeply and permanently. They exasperate the sufferers and their associates, exciting in them a spirit of hostility, which it is hard to allay. And, although, in general, the pupils range themselves on the side of the injured party, there are usually not wanting some among them, who, from envy or other malign feeling, are prone to add their ridicule of the supposed delinquent, to the infliction already imposed; thus indulging a spirit of malice as mean as it is unchristian.—They are ungenerous. The sufferer is entirely in the power of the master, compelled to endure, without even the privilege of making a reply; and, consequently, demanding his consideration and forbearance.

Far better is it to treat every one with an excess of tenderness, than that a single delicate spirit should be crushed by a sarcastic expression.

I would not overrate the degree of tender feeling in school children; it is seldom fairly estimated by those who have not been long familiar with them. It exists naturally in a very imperfect state. With both sexes it is the fruit of cultivation. Girls, being more precocious than boys, exhibit its indications earlier in life, and with more intensity. A large majority of our own sex, during the school age, evince it but rarely, and then in a slight degree.

In the perplexing trials of the school-room, you will sometimes be disposed to plead with your school, that they give you their more constant coöperation in the efforts you are making for order and progress. Your own sensibilities excited, you become pathetic in your appeals. Most of your audience are attentive while you are speaking; some are evidently interested, and you imagine that you have effected a general conversion. You dismiss them,—and the loud laugh and merry shout at your pathos, soon convince you that your effort has been thrown away; at least, on the great mass of your auditors.

It will doubtless shock you, at first, to notice with what unconcern they look upon the most flagrant acts of impropriety in their fellows, as they come up for correction; or their indifference at still more serious ills. The school-house burns down; domestic affliction or personal illness confines the teacher at home. Does the boy weep or manifest any concern? No; he rejoices in a holiday or a vacation that the event confers upon him! The germ of sensibility exists within him; but it is to be developed and cherished, or it will lie dormant, as—left to themselves—do the other faculties and properties of the mind, and every sacrifice will be made on the altar of *selfishness*!

Let not this view of the material on which you will have to act cause you to despond. Study carefully, that you may understand, *boy-nature*. Look upon it calmly, and take courage; remembering that, although, when acting in masses, these embryo men are little affected as you desire them to be, yet that there is not one among them who may not be moved to good issues, if taken apart with you *alone*, and the effort made upon him individually. All the weapons of the boy-nature are at once laid aside, and he yields in dutiful submission.

Boys think it brave to oppose their seniors in public, even when they know them to be in the right; and sometimes the fear of ridicule impels them, in the presence of others, to resist the best impulses of the mind. "*Dare to do right*" is a good motto for every human being, and should be kept constantly before the young.

To "understand boys" was, in the opinion of Dr. Arnold, master of the famous Rugby School, in England, a primary qualification in a teacher, and one on which he placed great stress. It was this—in which he himself excelled—that aided him immensely in the government of his school. He was generous in his treatment of his students, bestowed on them his confidence, and, in doubtful cases, gave them the benefit of the doubt, and thus excited in them a sentiment of magnanimity, which made them his friends and coadjutors. In adopting his example, you may sometimes award a degree of merit not justly due to your pupils; but the balance of good will still be in your favor. If overrated by you, their pride or self-esteem will incite them to an

effort to become all that you suppose them to be ; while a suspicion expressed of low desert will produce the very opposite effect.

The so-called "minor morals" should be ranked by teachers at a higher grade. Among these stands *punctuality*. In this it is important that your practice be positive. Proximate punctuality is no virtue. To be at your post a few minutes after the appointed time, will not meet the claims of duty. John Kingsbury, of Providence, R. I., the present president of the American Institute of Instruction, stated in public, a few years since, that, during the twenty-five years that he had been a teacher, he had never been tardy but once, and then but a single minute. And Mr. Libbey, a veteran teacher at Portland, Me., stated, in reply, that "he could beat that." It is hardly necessary to inquire as to the success of such teachers. Fidelity and exactness like this are a satisfactory guaranty for the quality of the schools. Hundreds of the honored matrons of the city of Roger Williams are the living testimonials to the merit of the school where they and their daughters were educated ; and the universal confidence reposed in the venerated teacher of Portland is evidence enough for his.

Punctuality is a good indicator of habits and character. You may reasonably expect that a man habitually practising it is systematic, orderly, and exact in his business transactions, prompt and upright in his dealings, and just in his various relations with society. It is a fact worthy of note that most of the benefactors of the world, whose history has come down to us, have been remarkable for their observance of this duty.

In your engagement with the school-committee, by whom you are employed, certain hours are appropriated to school instruction. Let no affair, personal to yourself, interfere with the claims of your pupils. Every moment will be needed by them in the various studies they attempt. He who takes school hours for reading his newspaper, carrying on his private correspondence, receiving calls of ceremony, or making arrangements for the evening party, is unjust to his charge, and will inevitably fail of success in his calling, lose the approbation of his employers and of his own mind, if not ensure the execration of the young beings whom he specially defrauds.

Strive to open your school, and close it, at the appointed hours. This will promote punctuality among your scholars, and encourage them to be constant in their attendance. But if any one desires or needs more instruction than the six hours of school-time afford,—although it be "not so nominated in the bond,"—fail not to yield a portion of your own time to the wishes of these ambitious or needy ones. A thousand considerations will arise in your own mind to reward the act, and the good you will thus confer will yield you a richer

than a golden harvest. The man who stands, watch in hand, waiting for the hour of twelve to arrive, and then precipitates his school into the highway, whether a reasonable amount of instruction have been given or not, mainly bent on escaping from the walls of his school-room, can have but a low conception of the duties of his office, and must be wholly destitute of the spirit of the true teacher. Yet such, and not a few, do cumber the school-houses in some of our towns and villages. O, that we might have a general expurgation of them throughout the land, for the benefit of the rising generation, and the honor of the teaching fraternity!

Much depends on first steps. On assuming the position of a school-master, therefore, you should have well determined in your own mind what you propose to aim at and to accomplish—should have your course well defined, both as respects the thing to be done, and the mode of doing it. And, without attempting anything in the way of class instruction, on the morning of presentation to the school, the time would be profitably spent in an address to them, couched in familiar language, but delivered with an easy dignity of manner, in which you would state what you propose to do for them in the continuation of any good course on which they had entered, introducing to them such other subjects as would be interesting and useful, whether concerning the mind, the manners, the morals, or the affections. In unfolding the value of these various departments of their future labor, you would find it advantageous and interesting to them to intersperse your statements with such illustrations as might be in point, which, if graphically given, they would be sure to remember in connection with the subject; and, at the close, ask them how they like your plan, thus drawing them out, securing their confidence, and preparing them for active coöperation. You would naturally tell them that the term would soon pass away, and that you wished them to make all the improvement of which they were capable, in the time; that this would be expected by their parents, by the committee, and by you. You would assure them of your friendship, your encouragement, and your assistance; telling them, at the same time, that yours would be a *working* school, and that their happiness in it, as well as the amount of their attainments, would depend on their diligence, their fidelity, and the temper of mind in which they should come to school from day to day;—that you would endeavor to be gentle, patient, and kind; but that it would be very difficult for you to be always so, unless each one should strive to do his duty—to do right;—that you should require a strict attention to order, and to all the rules of the school; confident that, without this, there could be no progress, and no comfort in the new relations which had then been formed.

You would, also, insist on regular and constant attendance at the time appointed, showing them not only how much they themselves would lose by absence and tardiness, but how unjust and unkind to their classmates and their teacher it would be, to inflict the loss and labor upon them, which would be the inevitable consequence of their delinquency in these respects.

An address, in some such style as this, would probably secure their attention, excite their zeal, and induce new resolutions to secure your approbation.—Let a recess follow. Give the scholars an opportunity to exchange thoughts on what has been said to them; and, if a favorable impression have been made, this intercourse will confirm and deepen it.

The classification and seating will occupy the remainder of the session, perhaps the whole of the day. No matter — “make haste slowly” is a good maxim. The success of the term will depend mainly on securing a right start. With your best uninterrupted efforts you will be unable, in a school of strangers, to make an unexceptionable organization at first; but, by devoting a reasonable portion of time to the effort, you will have the less to undo.

Tell the scholars that, as soon as you shall have become acquainted with them, you intend to establish a “merit roll,” and that you cherish the hope that all, or with few exceptions, will have a claim to the front rank. Tell them that you want them all to become good scholars, but that your highest approbation will be bestowed on those who are the best boys and girls.

By thus showing them that they all have it in their power to distinguish themselves, whatever their scholarship, you may be able to enlist a large number of allies in your work, which will hence go on all the more prosperously, because adopted cheerfully, or from choice.

You are now ready for the assignment of lessons. If it can be done without confusion, allow the voice of each class to fix their length at first, cautioning them against attempting too much, and notifying them that the amount assigned will be required, when due, thoroughly and perfectly learned. You will thus ascertain how much they can master, and save yourself from the murmurs of discontent so almost sure to arise from the new teacher's first tasks. It is difficult for one familiar with the minds of his pupils, in all cases to adopt judiciously the amount to be acquired at a sitting, by each class; and, where the parties are strangers to each other, impossible. A good rule is, to require too little, rather than too much. When the teacher ascertains by experience what the classes respectively are able to do, he can, of course, modify his requisitions accordingly. The mind should not, on the one hand, be overtasked; nor, on the other, have

so little demanded as to permit it to lie torpid, or prevent a vigorous action. In this, as in most things else, wisdom points to the middle course. Give enough to do to keep the powers bright, but not enough to crush or to burden.

When the lessons have been assigned, question the pupils, to ascertain whether they know how to study; for on this the facility and certainty of acquisition, in a great measure, depend.

If they have had no instruction on the point, show them how. If the lesson is one merely *memoriter*, it should be studied piece-meal—say, to the first period, and then review; to the second, and then a repetition of the first and second; to the third, and a repetition of the first, second, and third,—and so on to the end; by which process the learner holds, as it were by a cog-wheel, all that he gains, instead of attempting too much at once, whereby the new portions learned drive the former out of the memory.

If the question of opening your school in the morning, with religious exercises, be left for you to determine, you will, of course, decide in favor of it. The good effect of it, if judiciously conducted, will be felt through the day, and its influence carried beyond the walls of your school-room. But let me entreat you not to permit the services to be performed in a dull, monotonous tone of voice, as if the whole were a mere lifeless formality. If the heart be in it, the manner will evince the fact, and the children will feel that it involves a solemn reality. If not, it should be omitted altogether;

“ For God abhors the sacrifice  
Where not the heart is found ; ”

and your school, instead of receiving benefit, will sustain lasting injury in its religious nature, as well as in its estimate of public religious services.

Be careful, in reading the service,—whether it be in a book prepared for such occasions, or a prayer-book, hymn-book, or the Bible,—to do it with feeling, with appropriate modulation, and all the expression that properly belongs to the sentiments uttered. Why some of the sublimest compositions that have come down to us should be murdered, as they not unfrequently are, by those who attempt to read them in public, it would be impossible to say; but let it not be done in schools, where the art of reading is professedly taught; in fact, where it is the leading department of attention. There, at least, they should be read with propriety and effect.

If you are endowed with *enthusiasm*, you are now prepared to commence your work. This is a property as essential to complete success in teaching, as any belonging to mind. The individual destitute of it,

would do well to devote his powers to some other field of labor. If, however, a degree of it subsists, and a strong faith in its importance, it may be increased by culture. The difference between a school conducted by a person largely imbued with it, and one who possesses little or none, is as the living compared to the dead.

On the return of Horace Mann from his educational tour in Europe, he published, in his Seventh Annual Report to the Board of Education of Massachusetts, the result of his observations; and nothing was more striking than the disparity he pointed out between the Prussian schools and those of our own country, in respect to this element of power over the young. And although, it must be confessed, there seemed to be an excess of it, as it was said to be applied to the teaching and management of the Prussian schools, yet I have ever thought that an infusion of the same spirit into our American modes of educating our children, might well be considered as an improvement of very great value.

Enthusiasm in the teacher gives vitality to whatever he says or does in presence of the school; while a heavy, slow, phlegmatic temperament puts to sleep even the animation of childhood, and crushes its buoyancy as with a leaden weight.

I am well aware that a state of unceasing excitement is healthful neither to the body nor the mind; that both would soon sink under it; that teacher and taught would become its victims. I do not, therefore, plead for this. I ask only for the presence of this great principle in the man, to be used as a just discretion may dictate.

Ebenezer Bailey,\* a man who stood in the very front rank of good teachers, in the city of Boston, a quarter of a century ago, wrought wonders with a large school of young ladies, taught by him for several years, through the instrumentality of this power. Scarcely did the Prussian mode of recitation and of drill, as related by Mr. Mann, exceed what might with truth be said of Mr. Bailey's school. The latter had not the violence, the almost fierceness of manner, witnessed in the Prussian schools; but for earnestness, for intensity of thought, and breathlessness of action,—nothing feminine in the human form could go beyond them.

\* Mr. Bailey had been very successful in the public service, before the establishment of his private school; first, as principal of the reading department of the South school, and subsequently as that of the high school for girls. This latter excellent and very popular school, having been abolished in the mayoralty of the elder Quincy, on principles of a very anti-republican character, Mr. Bailey wrote an able pamphlet, addressed to the mayor, denouncing the measure in scorching terms. And when he, soon after, proposed opening a school of a

He would arrange a class of ten or twelve around a black-board, and, writing a problem on it, would put them upon their speed in its solution. Each, with slate in hand, would begin, the moment she had caught the idea, to solve it, the object being to obtain the answer in the shortest time. She that succeeded first called out *one*, the next, *two*, and so on to the last. This fixed their relative rank. The classes were usually well matched; and, as the excitement was continued but for a short period at a lesson, it was one of the most interesting exhibitions of an intellectual race that can well be imagined. The rapidity with which the calculations were made, and the figures marked upon the slates by the several competitors, memory even almost refuses to declare. Suffice it to say, that one might travel far, and examine many schools, without finding a parallel in these respects. And this example is given as illustrative of the operation of this quality in the hands of a skilful teacher.

It is not my intention to assert that there are now no schools equal to Mr. Bailey's. This would be untrue; but I wish to keep before the mind of the young teacher the important fact, that the pledge of success in school-keeping is a well-directed enthusiasm, which this school so well illustrated.

It would be impossible thus to influence a whole school, especially of both sexes, of the diversity of ages that attend most of our public seminaries. Nor is it desirable to do it with the same scholars habitually; but he who is able thus to bring out all of mental capacity that a class possesses, has his pupils in his hand, as it were, and may mould them as the potter moulds the clay.

Some school exercises are better adapted than others to secure such entire absorption of the attention; but the enthusiastic teacher will never want for expedients to elicit the ardor of the young, and turn it to the best account.

I shall make no apology for having entered into these details; for I am confident they are what the young members of our fraternity want. To the teacher of experience they are not addressed: he is supposed to be among those who have "already attained."

similar character, on his own account, large numbers availed themselves of the advantage of joining it; and his annual catalogue, for 1829, gives the names of one hundred and sixty-eight pupils connected with it.

He was a thoroughly educated man, of fine taste and just discrimination. His work on Algebra, his Young Ladies' Class Book, and several poems of merit, evince the strength and versatility of his genius. He was one of the leading founders of the American Institute of Instruction, to which he devoted much time, thought, and labor.



## LETTER VI.

### MORAL INSTRUCTION.

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WHILE I was deliberating as to what should be the main topic of this letter, I received the annexed circular, which settled the question at once :

“TOLEDO, O., *Oct. 15th*, 1856.

“DEAR SIR: The undersigned having been appointed a Committee, by the Ohio State Teachers' Association, to report, at its meeting in December next, upon the best method of giving moral instruction in schools, would respectfully ask your opinions upon the following questions, with the liberty of making them public :

“What is the comparative importance of Moral Instruction in a system of Education ?

“Should special instruction be given in Morals in our Free Schools ?

“What is the best method of giving Moral Instruction in School ?

“You will do us a great favor by answering the above inquiries at your earliest convenience.

“Please direct to John Eaton, Jr., Toledo, O.

“Very respectfully, yours, &c.,

JOHN EATON, Jun.,  
M. F. COWDERY,  
JOHN HANCOCK,  
JOHN ROBINSON.”

It is gratifying to those who believe that the great want in our community is a higher degree of practical morality, to find associations formed for the inculcation and dissemination of moral truth, established in our large towns and cities; public lay lecturers laboring in the same cause; school-masters insisting more perseveringly upon it; and, especially, to find it engaging the attention of an organized body of teachers in a large, intelligent, and powerful State, and adopting measures, like men in earnest, for the securing of the best results.

Most cordially will every true man lend his coöperation to the cause, in a well-founded confidence that, whatever he may be able to do, little or much, he becomes, on easy terms to himself, to such extent, a benefactor to society.

With no desire to claim, even in the humblest manner, any such distinction, but for my own gratification, I shall attempt to answer the interrogatories contained in the circular, to which I but very briefly replied at the time of receiving it. Too late though it be to subserve the special object of the committee who issued the circular, it may not be wholly useless in other directions.

1. "What is the comparative importance of Moral Instruction in a system of Education?"

To this question, it seems to me, there can be but one reply; and that is: *Moral Education is paramount to all other.* The physical and intellectual nature should by no means be neglected; but if *they* are developed, exercised and trained, and the moral nature overlooked, or left to take care of itself, the hopes of humanity may sink in despair.

In the garden left uncultivated, the weeds soon overgrow, and choke the flowers and useful herbs. So with the human soul; if the flowers of virtue that spring spontaneously, — and I admit that such there are, — be not attended to and cherished, the tares of evil may soon overpower and crush them.

I do not intend to assert that man's nature is wholly depraved. As a question of theology, it may not be proper here either to affirm or deny it. I will only say that, in the masses of society, the common tendency seems rather to be more towards evil than towards good. Hence the indispensable necessity of exerting every practicable means of counteracting this tendency.

If the capacities of the mind and body receive the whole attention of the educator, the pupil's power for mischief will be all the more increased, and he may, and probably will, become so much the more accomplished a knave.

\* \* \* \* \* "Talents, angel-bright,  
If wanting worth, are shining instruments  
In false ambition's hand, to finish faults  
Illustrious, and give infamy renown."

That talents may be "of worth" (or worthy) in the world, they must have this right direction given them; and this should be done in the school period of life. To delay it is unsafe, if not criminal and ruinous.

I will venture the assertion that those ugly excrescences which darken the page of history in the lives of Nero, Caligula, Richard III., Napoleon I., Aaron Burr, and Benedict Arnold, did not enjoy that early moral training, instruction, and example, which

are needful to secure a career of purity, virtue, honor, and patriotism; while, in the examples of Alfred the Great, Constantine, Fenelon, Sir Thomas More, Howard, and Washington, we feel that an influence, potent and holy, was breathed into them, that helped to make them what they were.

All these individuals have their counterparts in all countries, and in almost every school-room, at the present day,—not as to place, power, and distinction, but as to disposition. They, hence, are growing up to crime, cruelty, profligacy, or perfidy; or to honor, usefulness, benevolence, or virtue;—advancing to positions in society, whence their evil deeds will consign to the grave their broken-hearted friends, and their own names to infamy; or from which a halo of light will surround their names, during their lives, for their good deeds, and grateful memory bless them after their departure.

Finally, national probity, honor, and virtue, constitute a State; the State is composed of men; the men of the next generation are now school-boys. What it is desirable to have them become as *men*, they must be taught to be as *boys*. Nor is it safe to leave this work to be done by the pulpit or the fireside. Every proper means that can be brought to bear upon the young, should be put in requisition; and none is more appropriate than, and scarcely any so effective as, the well-applied, faithful, and persevering lessons of the school-room.

From what I have said in answer to the first interrogatory, my reply to the second will readily be anticipated.

2. "Should special instruction be given in Morals in our Free Schools?"

I reply, unhesitatingly, in the affirmative. That it may be found more difficult than instruction in literature and science, I am well aware; for, although there are persons of the nicest degree of moral perception and moral refinement among our fraternity, there are others who, perhaps, might be considered obtuse in the department of morals. There are many thousand teachers in the public schools of our land, who take the situations as temporary expedients, with no intention of becoming permanent in the profession, and who are engaged, only for the lack of better, for a period of a few months. Their qualifications often fall short of the moral department; from such, of course, it would be useless to expect much on this point, whatever the school committee might require.

But even this should not exonerate them from doing what they can. No person should be placed in charge of the young, who has not mastered the great principles of morality in theory, nor whose

life does not evince a practical acquaintance with them. The services of better and better candidates should be secured, until those fully qualified can be found. Let committees or school supervisors insist on the moral qualification as the prominent, leading, and indispensable one, and the requisition will increase the supply, until, in time, the schools will, in most cases, be well provided.

The Legislature of Massachusetts, long ago, made it a matter of legal requisition that certain things should be taught in her public schools. The act on Public Instruction, Section 7, reads thus: "It shall be the duty of the president, professors, and tutors, of the university at Cambridge, and of the several colleges, and of all preceptors and teachers of academies, and all other instructors of youth, to exert their best endeavors to impress on the minds of children and youth committed to their care and instruction, the principles of piety, justice, and a sacred regard to truth, love to their country, humanity, and universal benevolence, sobriety, industry and frugality, chastity, moderation and temperance, and those other virtues which are the ornament of human society, and the basis upon which a republican constitution is founded; and it shall be the duty of such instructors to endeavor to lead their pupils, as their ages and capacities will admit, into a clear understanding of the tendency of the above-mentioned virtues to preserve and perfect a republican constitution, and secure the blessings of liberty, as well as to promote their future happiness, and also to point out to them the evil tendency of the opposite vices."

Thus it will be perceived that, as far as Massachusetts is concerned, no public teacher, of any grade, has it at his option to teach morality or not; but, as a loyal citizen, he must do it. Well would it be for every State in the confederacy to adopt a similar law.

Teachers are required "to exert their best endeavors" in this work. Consequently, it should be kept constantly in view, and not be left to chance for its exercise. A time should be set apart for it as regularly as for any of the studied lessons of the school; and at that time it should be invariably brought up.

3. "What is the best method of giving Moral Instruction in School?"

This question it is not so easy to answer, for the reason that teachers of experience, with any degree of originality, must differ in modes, even, of arriving at like results. William B. Fowle, a veteran teacher, of great success in his vocation, alluding to his means of teaching, in the outline of his school plans, says that he teaches

"Moral Philosophy chiefly by Reading the Scriptures, Conversation, and Example." This method, in the hands of a discreet and competent teacher, must doubtless succeed well. Other teachers attempt the same thing by rules, by requisitions, and by the study of books prepared especially for the purpose, like Wayland's Moral Science.

No one plan should be invariably pursued. Children tire of routine and monotony. Variety is necessary, even to the adult mind, to secure attention and perpetual interest; and, with children, this is still more requisite. Schools, again, differ in their elements. Some are composed wholly of young pupils; others, entirely of those in the closing years of school life,—as in the high schools of large towns and cities; others, still, are mixed,—ranging from, it may be, four to eighteen years of age. Hence, a course of instruction must be varied to meet the circumstances of the taught.

In schools of advanced age, didactic instruction may be resorted to with good effect; and if the pupils are required, a few at a time, to bring dissertations, written by themselves, on subjects previously assigned, and these be read to the school, and commented on by the teacher, and, when time permits, by the other pupils, a spirit of emulation will be roused, fresh interest excited, and the school generally be called to reflection. It is to such that the treatises on morals, under various titles, are best adapted. The lessons learned may very properly become the subject of a paper or debate, in addition to the recitation to the teacher.

With all grades of schools it is highly beneficial to notice every incident that occurs among the pupils, or that is notorious in the town or neighborhood, from which a useful lesson may be derived, virtue be rendered more attractive, and vice more repulsive.

Incidents of this nature are suitable to all ages; and, though they be simplified to the degree required by the humblest capacity, will not fail, if skilfully related, to secure, to some extent, the interest of all.

Nor is this peculiar to children. In some Eastern nations, as is well known, itinerants earn their subsistence by the narration of stories, and, if well trained, hold large audiences, wherever they find them, in delighted wonder by their stories, whether fictitious or the statement of facts.

The pulpit, at the present day, is rendered more or less efficacious for securing the attention of an audience, moving the feelings, and converting the mind, in proportion as it illustrates its positions or enforces its logic by the use of narratives. Nay, the Saviour himself evinced how well he knew what was in man, and by what avenues

he could reach the recesses of his soul, and convince the understanding, while he touched the heart, by the frequent use he made of parables in his preaching. The train of reasoning may be lost, but the story that enforces it abides forever in the memory, as a salient fountain of encouragement or conviction.

The teacher should take a hint from these facts. There is, as it strikes me, no way by which he can do more for the moral nature of his pupil, than exactly to adopt the method above mentioned. Of course, his own life and character should show forth the worthy doctrines he inculcates,

Subjoined are specimens of anecdotes, original and selected, of the nature I would recommend for school use. The teacher, by a little thought, might collect any number of the kind, and, doubtless, many more suitable and of higher merit.

Let the lesson, for example, be Truth, or the Telling of Truth. If the audience be very juvenile, he may relate the well-known story of Washington and the Cherry-tree, or something that may occur to him of like tendency. If more advanced, or mixed, the account of Petrarch and the Cardinal may be presented. And this, I may, perhaps, be excused for inserting here, as, although familiar to many, it has not been so often presented to our American youth as the former has.

It is this: "Petrarch, a celebrated Italian poet, who flourished in the fourteenth century, endeared himself to Cardinal Colonna, in whose family he resided, by his strict regard to truth. A violent quarrel had arisen in the household of this nobleman; and the Cardinal, that he might ascertain the facts in the case, called all his people together, and required each one to take an oath on the Gospels that he would state the simple truth. The brother of the Cardinal himself was not excused from it; but, when Petrarch appeared to take the oath, the Cardinal closed the book, and said, 'As for you, Petrarch, your *word* is sufficient!'"

I shall never forget the feeling of proud satisfaction for the hero of the anecdote, with which I was filled, in first reading, as a boy, this charming incident. The Washington story, at a still earlier period, had a similar effect upon me. Hence, I infer that boys at the present time would be affected in like manner.

If I wished to inculcate a spirit of justice and manliness, I would relate something like the following: A boy of six years old, at play in one of the streets of Boston, accidentally broke a pane of glass in a window of a dwelling-house. Without hesitation, he rang the door-bell and said to the person who came to the door, "My name is

A. L. T——; I have broken your window, and my father will send a man to mend it.” Receiving a kind word from the person at the door, he bowed and ran to his home to relate the case.

Here is an instance of true courage: A teacher, having received satisfactory evidence of the guilt of one of his pupils in a case of serious mischief, was about to inflict a penalty due to the offence, when another boy, of twelve years of age, called out, “O, sir, don’t punish William! *He* did n’t do it! ’T was *I*, sir!”

As an example of civility and obedience, I would say, A gentleman calling at C. H. S——, on business, one day, requested a lad at the door to hold his horse while he went in. On his return, he offered the lad a piece of money, which was courteously declined. The gentleman insisted, but the lad was immovable, saying, “Mr. T—— would not like it, if I took pay for holding a gentleman’s horse for a few minutes.”

I say an example of *obedience*. There was no specific school-law for such a case. It was deduced from the law of universal kindness, which was the summing up of the school-code, and which the boy so appropriately applied.

Here follows a beautiful example of youthful kindness:

THE DISINTERESTED BOY.—The sun had set, and the night was spreading its mantle over hill-top, and valley, and lonely wood, and busy village. While the winds were beginning to sweep through the trees, lights were here and there peeping through the windows, to tell that, though the wind was cold and blustering without, there might be peace and comfort within.

At this hour, Mr. Bradley passed through a little village among these hills, and, urging his horse forward as the night became darker, took his way through the main road toward the next town, where he wished to pass the night. As he passed the last house in the village, he thought he heard some one call; but, supposing it might be some boy shouting to another boy, he thought little of it. He heard the call again and again; at last, it occurred to him that some one might wish to speak to him, and he stopped the pace of his horse, and looked behind the chaise to see if he could discover who was calling.

“Stop, sir, stop!” said a little boy, who was running with all his might to overtake him.

Mr. Bradley stopped his horse, and a little boy of eight or ten years came up, panting at every breath.

“Well, my little fellow, what do you wish for?” said Mr. Bradley.

“You are losing your trunk, sir,” answered the boy, as soon as he could speak.

“And so you have run all this way to tell me of it, have you, my good boy?”

“Yes, sir.”

Mr. Bradley jumped out of his chaise, and saw that his trunk, which was strapped underneath his carriage, was unfastened at one end, so that a sudden

jolt might have loosened it altogether, and he have lost it without knowing where it had gone.

"You are very kind, my little lad," said the gentleman, "to take all this trouble; you have saved me from losing my trunk, and I feel much obliged to you. And now, are you tall enough to hold my horse while I fasten the trunk as it should be?" said Mr. Bradley.

"O, yes, sir," said the boy, stepping up, and taking hold of the bridle. He held the horse till Mr. Bradley was ready to start, and then said, "Good-night, sir," and stepped away.

"Stop a moment," said Mr. Bradley, taking a shilling from his pocket; "here is a piece of money to pay you for your trouble, and I feel very grateful besides."

"No, sir, thank you," said the boy, casting his eye full in the gentleman's face; "do you think I would take money for such a thing as *that*?"

"Ah!" said Mr. Bradley, as he afterward related the story, "I saw by his noble look that he had run from one half to three quarters of a mile, for the sake of doing a kindness to a stranger, and not for the hope of pay; and I could not find it in my heart to urge him to take the money; for I knew that the thought of doing good was a greater reward to him than money could have been. So I bade him 'good-night,' and he ran toward home; while I gave whip to the horse, and again rode briskly on; but I often think of that journey, and the noble-hearted boy who lived among the hills."

The following might be used to show the

ADVANTAGES OF POLITENESS. — An elderly lady, passing down a busy street in New Haven, was overtaken by a sudden shower. She was some distance from any acquaintance, and had no umbrella. She was deliberating what to do, when a pleasant voice beside her said, "Will you take my umbrella, madam?" The speaker was a boy, perhaps ten years old.

"Thank you," said the lady; "I am afraid you will get wet."

"Never mind me, ma'am; I am but a boy, and you are a lady."

"But perhaps you will accompany me to a friend's, and then I shall not find it necessary to rob you."

The boy did so, and received the thanks of the lady, and departed.

Two years rolled away. The lady often related the circumstance, and often wondered what had become of her friend, but little thinking ever to see him again. In the dull season of the year this boy was thrown out of employment, and, the circumstances coming to the knowledge of this lady, she gave him a good home till March, when she introduced him to a good situation. Verily, kindness seldom goes unrequited, even in this world.

Here is exhibited an instance of gratitude for favors received:

A PASSING INCIDENT. — As a man, of generous heart, from the country, was guiding, a few days since, his load of hay to the market, we saw, following him, and gathering the wisps of hay which dropped from the load, a poor woman and two lads, — the latter of perhaps the ages of seven and nine years. Our



attention was specially drawn to them, by observing that the man frequently took pains to throw whole handfuls of the hay down the side of the load, in order, as was quite apparent, to convey, in as quiet a manner as possible, sentiments of comfort to the hearts of these suffering poor. As our walk lay in the direction of the market, we determined to witness the conclusion of this exhibition of sympathy and generosity. By-and-by the gleaning became so abundant, that the poor woman could refrain from her expressions of gratitude no longer ; and, bursting into tears, she beckoned to the man to stop, and then, in a manner which indicated both intelligence and a delicate sense of her wretched condition, besought him to permit her a single word of thankfulness for his kindness.

"Madam," said the man, "I, too, have been in the vale of poverty, and seen the time when a lock of hay would have been considered a treasure. A friend, by an act of kindness, of less value in itself than the one I have done to you, saved me from despair, and made me hopeful for better days. Years have passed now, and a kind Providence has blessed me with a good farm and a happy home. For years, as I have waked each morning, I have seemed to hear a sweet voice whispering, '*This day remember the poor.*'"

As he said this, he raised the fork, and throw in the woman's arms as great a quantity as she and the lads could carry, and then drove onward, with a countenance expressive of the truth, "It is better to give than to receive."

We turned from the scene to read again, and with greater profit than ever, the story of Ruth, gleaning in the fields of the generous Boaz, and of the kindness of the reapers to the destitute and successful gleaner.

The following presents a specimen of lofty magnanimity :

A NOBLE REVENGE. — The coffin was a plain one, — a poor, miserable, pine coffin. No flowers on its top ; no lining of rose-white satin for the pale brow ; no smooth ribbons about the coarse shroud. The brown hair was laid decently back, but there was no crimped cap, with its neat tie beneath the chin. The sufferer from cruel poverty smiled in her sleep ; she had found bread, rest, and health.

"I want to see my mother," sobbed a poor child, as the city undertaker screwed down the top.

"You can't, — get out of the way, boy ! Why don't somebody take the brat ?"

"Only let me see her one minute," cried the hapless, hopeless orphan, clutching the side of the charity-box ; and, as he gazed into that rough face, anguished tears streamed rapidly down the cheek on which no childish bloom ever lingered. O, it was pitiful to hear him cry, "Only once, let me see my mother ; only once !"

Quickly and brutally the hard-hearted monster struck the boy away, so that he reeled with the blow. For a moment the boy stood panting with grief and rage ; his blue eye distended, his lips sprang apart, a fire glittered through his tears, as he raised his puny arm, and, with a most unchildish accent, screamed, "When I'm a man, I'll *kill* you for that !"

"There was a coffin and a heap of earth" between the mother and the poor, forsaken child, and a monument stronger than granite built in his boy-heart to the memory of a heartless deed.

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The court-house was crowded to suffocation.

"Does any one appear as this man's counsel?" asked the judge.

There was a silence when he finished, until, with lips tightly pressed together, a look of strange intelligence, blended with haughty reserve, upon his handsome features, a young man stepped forward, with a firm tread and kindling eye, to plead for the erring and the friendless. He was a stranger, but from his first sentence there was silence. The splendor of his genius entranced, convinced. The man who could not find a friend was acquitted.

"May God bless you, sir, — I cannot."

"I want no thanks," replied the stranger, with icy coldness.

"I — I believe you are unknown to me."

"Man! I will refresh your memory. Twenty years ago you struck a broken-hearted boy away from his mother's poor coffin. I was that poor, miserable boy."

The man turned livid.

"Have you rescued me, then, to take my life?"

"No; I have a sweeter revenge. I have saved the life of the man whose brutal deed has rankled in my breast for twenty years. Go! and remember the tears of a friendless child."

The man bowed his head in shame, and went out from the presence of a magnanimity as grand to him as incomprehensible; and the noble young lawyer felt God's smile in his soul forever after.

The style of some of these stories may need alteration, but the lessons taught in them will commend their adoption to every one.

In conclusion, I am satisfied that well-selected or original illustrations of the beauty of the several virtues to be inculcated, with well-adapted remarks in addition, by the teacher, will be found most effectual in teaching morals in schools, and have, at the same time, this advantage: that, if the subjects are judiciously chosen, with due regard to diversity, they seldom, if ever, weary the pupil, while they furnish his mind with exhibitions of lofty principles of action, which will be a valuable moral capital to him to the end of life.

POSTSCRIPT.—After the above letter was in type, I received from a friend a copy of Cowdery's "Moral Lessons;" a book prepared to carry out the main branch of the plan for moral instruction, which I have endeavored to unfold and recommend; and I should do injustice to myself, to the author of the work, and to the cause of moral improvement, were I to omit the acknowledgment of my obligation to him for his successful and appropriate labors. It is to be hoped that he will continue the work so well begun, and furnish, as his opportunities permit, an extension of these Lessons,—presenting a greater variety of illustrations, and touching an increased diversity of principles,—to the end that the work may at length become—as it is already, as far as it goes—a full store-house of material for the direction of the young in the formation of habits and principles indispensable to a successful encounter with the temptations to which they will be exposed.

The teacher himself, too, would render an important benefit to his school and his successors, by transcribing, in a book kept for the purpose, every incident or anecdote bearing upon the same point, for future use,—that those of this book may not become inefficient, by too frequent repetition, but, recurring after longer intervals, will retain their freshness and interest, from generation to generation.

## LETTER VII.

### SPELLING.

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IN 1830, — the year of the inauguration of the American Institute of Instruction, — I delivered a lecture before that association, “on the spelling of words, and a rational method of teaching their meaning.” The mode therein recommended had then been in use in my own school for ten years or more, and, during my subsequent school labors as a teacher, I never had occasion to abandon it, but had the satisfaction to know that it was adopted with success in many schools, public and private, in various parts of our country. As the lecture in question is nearly out of print, and no copies of the volume containing it to be had, I shall not hesitate to repeat a portion of the ideas it contained on the teaching of spelling.

There are thousands of persons in society who have never occasion, during their lives, to apply their knowledge of Algebra, Geometry, Mensuration, Surveying, &c., to practical uses, although it may have been acquired at the cost of severe labor, of many a throbbing of the brain, and much intellectual despondency ; \* but not so with this matter of *spelling*. Whoever has learned to write, must inevitably sometimes express his thoughts through the agency of the pen ; must do it by language ; of course, must know how to spell. And whatever the degree of knowledge he thus unfolds, how finished and beautiful soever may be his penmanship, he abates something in his claim on our regard if he spells incorrectly. Bad spelling, especially of one's native language, is *disreputable*. Every one is bound to spell with accuracy. But what is the true state of the case ? What proportion of those who have enjoyed the average means of education among us, do or can spell their vernacular tongue ? Take the first

\*I would not be understood to derogate in the slightest degree from the value of these studies. All, of our own sex at least, should learn them, as opportunity presents ; they are highly useful as exercises of the mind, for training in exact reasoning, and needful in many departments of business. They should, however, be taken in their proper order, and of course should *follow*, rather than *precede*, the *indispensable* studies.

fifty persons you meet, of either sex, at any age, and ask of them an off-hand page of manuscript; — if more than one in the whole number accomplishes it without a single error in orthography, you will be more fortunate than most of our fraternity have found themselves; and, I venture to assert, the result will not be more successful than this proportion. Where, then, lies the fault? Is accuracy in English spelling unattainable? Certainly not. I grant that it is, of all the departments of study attempted in our common schools, the most difficult. Still, it may be mastered. It requires only right methods and persevering practice. It is one of the first things to be taken up where the *book* is used, and is to be continued during the whole of the school life.

I would not wholly condemn the use of the spelling-book. It is valuable in one stage of the child's progress; but should by no means be used exclusively for *oral* practice. In the primary department of our schools but little is attempted, and much time is spent idly on the seats. Let a portion of this unoccupied time be employed in copying on the slate such lessons from the spelling-book as have been assigned to each individual or class. Let this be done, not merely that the learner may become familiar with the order of the letters in the word, but also with their forms, that he may readily distinguish between letters somewhat resembling each other, such as the *b* and the *d*, the *q* and the *p*; and that he may not fail (as I have known even *teachers* to do!) in the formation of the letters A, M, N, U, V, W, X, Y, &c., &c., transposing the shade and the hair-line, and even giving the wrong direction to the curve of the J, — to the central curve of the S, making it from the right to the left, instead of from the left to the right [thus, *z*]; and sometimes making the figure *J* for the capital letter *C*!

The training of the eye is an important part in the business of school education; and you will find no auxiliary more valuable to you in your vocation than that of *visible illustration*. The expert draftsman, through the medium of the blackboard, has a great advantage, in the school-room, over those who cannot draw; and I would recommend that every teacher, whether he have little talent or much in this art, cherish and cultivate it, as one important means of success in his calling.

Who, that has had the privilege of listening to lectures from the gifted Agassiz, has failed to be impressed by the vividness and beauty of his descriptions of animal life and structure, aided by his admirable sketches, made with unequalled rapidity and truthfulness, in chalk, on the blackboard?

But to return: the pupil more readily acquires the spelling lessons by studying them through the practice of copying on the slate, than by spelling them over to himself many times orally; and, as soon as he can write or print the words with facility, his *recitations*, so to call them, in this department should be rendered by this method alone. To spell by word of mouth, should be confined exclusively to beginners, who are unable to write or print with sufficient rapidity to make the plan of the more advanced scholars feasible.

When the children have, by this method, become somewhat familiar with the words in the spelling-book, their lessons in orthography should be taken from the *reading* books of their respective classes. If these books are well adapted to the capacities of the several classes, there will be a gradual progression in the language as well as the style of the books; and consequently an appropriate advancement or elevation in the class of words used for the spelling lessons. The lessons should be, in length, adapted to the capacity of the respective classes — say from a fourth to a whole page of the reading-book; not too long, or they will not be faithfully studied, as the only effectual method of study occupies considerable time. Let these lessons be given *every day*: nothing short of this will be sufficient to make good spellers of all who attend during the school-going age; and they who expect otherwise will surely be disappointed. To give an exercise in spelling once a week; to have it an oral one, comprising, it may be, one or two words to each scholar, and this without previous study, is a complete *sham*, evidently performed with no purpose of improvement, but merely for the name of a spelling lesson. It costs but little time, no labor, and is worth — *nothing*! To such a practice, which obtains in many schools, some of them of lofty pretension, and where the “higher branches” are taught, is the wretched deficiency in this humble but indispensable element of learning owing! Surely, a reform in this direction is loudly called for, even at the sacrifice of a share of the “accomplishments”!

If your school is so arranged as to have all your classes in one room, the lessons might be dictated to the whole in the same operation; thus: the teacher reads from — say the book of the *first* class, three words, marking them with his pencil, and then proceeds to the *second* class, and does the same; and so on till the whole series have been served once round. He then returns to the book of the first class, repeats the words read before, and adds three more; goes on to the second class again, pursuing the same process, and in like manner to the rest, till practice enough has been had, or till all the difficult words in the lesson have been given out. The pupils write these

words on their slates, which are then gathered up, class by class, for examination. Every error is marked by the examiner, and, subsequently, the slates are returned to their owners for correction. They should be shown to the teacher, after having been corrected, and then copied into a book, with the part of speech and the meaning of the words as they occur in the lesson added. Much of this work might be committed to the charge of advanced scholars—good spellers—of careful habits, much to their advantage and to the relief of the teacher.

If the classes occupy separate rooms, there would be a saving of time in giving out the words to be spelled, during the *reading* hour of each class; and then dictating but one word at a time, and not repeating it, unless misunderstood by a member of the class; a signal being given by each one when the word has been written. A large number of words may, in this way, be written in an almost incredibly short time, when by practice a class has become expert in the exercise.—I regret here to give a caution against a fraud that is sometimes attempted in these lessons; although when we know that, in our most respectable colleges, similar acts of unfairness are sometimes practised, our mortification is in some degree abated, though our grief remains the same.

Sitting or standing together, boys sometimes, when in doubt of the proper spelling of a word, steal a look at a neighbor's slate, and thus solve the doubt by taking advantage of another's fidelity in study or superior scholarship. Sometimes, too, they have been known to write beforehand, on a corner of the slate, or on a small bit of paper, to be concealed in the hand, the particularly difficult words that occur in the lesson. These and similar dishonest devices, the judicious teacher should vigilantly guard against, and, if detected, denounce in a tone of stern indignation,—making, of course, all reasonable distinction between a *first* offence and a *young* pupil, and one more than once repeated by an old offender.

I have spoken of a particular mode of study; it is this: most pupils, before learning spelling lessons from a reading-book, would have become familiar with the greater part of the words that occur in a piece of ordinary composition, and would naturally infer that all the small words, at least, they could spell correctly. Consequently, in some modes of study, they would be subject to most unlooked-for errors; for it is far from being true that the difficulties in spelling lie principally with the *long* words; numerous examples to the contrary may be easily adduced. The rule, then, to obviate the evil, is, for the pupil to write on his slate, or a piece of paper, to the dictation of

another, the whole lesson, — difficult and easy portions, — and, after having corrected the errors by the book, or by the aid of some one competent to the work, to study upon the words missed until all are fully mastered. This having been done before the spelling hour arrives, seldom fails to give the pupil the mastery at the time of need.

This long process may be thought too expensive in time; but not, I think, by those who estimate accuracy in written language at its proper value. It should be remembered, too, that the time is not spent in merely learning to *spell*. Great facility in writing with the pencil is acquired; the capacity for writing English composition is increased; and a better acquaintance with the style of standard authors — from whose writings the selections in our school-books are usually made — is secured. Surely, all these advantages ought to plead for the adoption of our rule.

There is a wide difference in the power of the eye, in different individuals. Some do not see an error, although indicated by the examiner's mark, and will complain that "the word is marked, when it is right"! With such, patience and long practice are necessary. Some are naturally good spellers, and need but little study, while others require a long-continued and resolute course, to conquer the innate defect. I have, however, seldom known one to fail often in the daily task, when studied in this way. On the contrary, I have had pupils who, after having tried various other expedients, and failed of success, come to me and say, exultingly, "I never miss now, sir, since I have studied in your way!"

Although the operation of the rule should be general, in regard to the method of study, individual cases will arise, in which a dispensation may be made to advantage, and should be made, in justice to the individual concerned. This practice continued for years, by pupils with good intellectual powers, right organs, and diligent and careful habits, usually gives a success in orthography reaching to almost perfection — notwithstanding the inherent difficulties in a language which owes its origin to so numerous and great a variety of sources. These are they that may be trusted to examine the work of their school-fellows, and thus benefit themselves and others, while they redeem a portion of the teacher's time for other labors.

You will not have failed to observe, even in a short experience, that certain words are always missed by some members of a class. These should, consequently, be given out whenever they occur in a lesson. Among them you will call to mind, separate, tranquillity, Tuesday, certificate, absence, here, *ad.*, hear, *v.*, there, *ad.*, their, *pro.*, preceding, conscious, crystal, crystallize, &c.; and all that class of

words in which *ie* or *ei* occur—such as *receive*, *believe*, *perceive*, &c. Likewise, words belonging to the class which double, or not, the final consonant, on taking an additional syllable beginning with a vowel, as *wrapped*, *benefited*, *omitted*, *tinned*, &c., &c. The persistence of pupils in errors of this kind, goes to prove the necessity of a long-continued course of practice with a large majority, while they remain at school.

The question of a *standard of orthography* naturally comes up here. This may seem to involve the teacher in some embarrassment; but not necessarily. The words are comparatively few as to whose orthography scholars disagree; and, as the books to be used in public schools are decided on by the committee or school-board having the matter in charge, the teacher has no option in the case. He should have an opinion of his own, and express it freely and independently; but he is not responsible for results under the control of his official superiors.

With the teacher of a private school the case is different. He chooses, for his printed authorities, such books as his judgment approves, and *is* responsible for the consequences. Let him keep himself free from partisan bias, and secure the best aids he can find for his noble work.

Every teacher, who is imbued with the true spirit of his profession, will state his views frankly, in the course of his instructions, and give his reasons for them. This he should do modestly, awarding full justice to the books furnished, and to their authors,—mainly desirous to benefit the children of his charge, and not to evince a hostile sentiment to any one.

It is not to be supposed that every teacher in the common schools of our land will be, or will consider himself, competent to decide independently on the comparative merits of rival books,—each having ardent, powerful, and learned friends,—some, perhaps, influenced by personal interest to become the trumpeters in the cause they have espoused; but it is the duty of every one, who has adopted the business of instructing others, to inform himself, to every practical extent, on questions intimately connected with his daily duties.

It has been said that the teacher should be *above* the text-books used in his classes—should be able to correct any error that may occur in them, rather than blindly follow their lead; this I acknowledge to be an important desideratum, and he who approaches most nearly to qualifications of this grade, will prove most worthy of his responsible station, and make it the medium of the highest good. Still, we must accept of something short of this for a time, or many



schools will be without teachers. All who act as such, influence their pupils, to some extent, and, hence, things in the book which are disapproved by them, will not be fully adopted by the scholars, whatever may be the written rule. "The master says so," has great weight, even at the fireside.

Although the long "War of the Dictionaries" has been carried on principally by booksellers, almost every one, with even but slight literary pretension, has indulged in predilections for one side or the other, — displayed, at times, in debate of no very amiable tone. Well would it be if all could harmonize, and adopt one uniform standard of spelling and pronouncing our language. But this can never be. It savors too much of conservatism for the present state of the world. The parties would never coalesce. Those who are content with what is time-honored, would not accept a change, whose chief recommendation would, perhaps, be its novelty; and opponents, having secured a degree of success, would never yield their vantage-ground, but persevere in the hope of a final triumph.

Much credit is confessedly due to Doctor Webster, who devoted a whole lifetime to letters, and whose aim was the improvement of his native tongue. But from the time of the publication of his first large work, proposing an alteration in the mode of spelling certain classes of words (1793), to this day, that portion of the community most capable of judging in the case, never favored his innovations. They did not admit the authority of an individual to prescribe the way in which they should write their vernacular. Nor are our countrymen — always jealous of an invasion of their personal rights — peculiar in this respect. The people of imperial France have never universally yielded to the prescriptions of the French Academy — the highest literary authority in their country — for an alteration in the orthography of some classes of French words; but former modes are still adhered to by many of their countrymen, notwithstanding the *prestige* of this imposing authority.

Something might have been done by us and in Great Britain, if learned bodies or institutions, already in the public confidence, had taken a stand in the matter; but to follow the dictum of one man, however learned, the people would never consent.

The style of language of a people must and will be decided by the people themselves. The silent influence of the best writers of the time will always modify the fashion of expression and the mode of spelling; but general changes must ever be gradual, and a long time be required to permeate the masses.

The duty of a lexicographer is to unfold the state of a language as

it is used by the great body of educated men, and not according to the fancy of a single mind. His book is to represent what exists, rather than what, in his view, ought to be. And herein, as it seems to me, lies the difference between the two great competitors in the contest referred to. One, a man of notions, has endeavored — unsupported by a great majority of the learned or by current usage — to foist upon the world, in some instances, the results of his own whims, sustained at times by very inconclusive reasonings, not always consistent; — the other, has given us a representation of the language as found in written and in oral use — corroborating his own impressions by writers most worthy of confidence, and by speakers of the purest taste; in pronunciation, accent, and orthography, giving the various authorities in their order, and indicating his personal preference mainly by placing his chosen method first.

If the question were to rest on this view alone, there could hardly be a doubt of the almost universal verdict. But perhaps my statement is partial; possibly, prejudice may mingle its influence and warp my judgment. I, however, give it honestly, with no personal or sinister purpose, but as the conclusion at which I have arrived, after no inconsiderable investigation of the subject for more than a quarter of a century, and all the experience that teaching the language has furnished during that period. But while I would unhesitatingly announce my preference for Worcester's dictionaries over Webster's, because I find in them the evidence of the most careful, elaborate, and thorough study of the language, the most impartial report of its pronunciation as observed in the most reliable public speakers of learning, taste, and experience; I do not hesitate to say that Dr. Webster's are worthy of a place on the desk of every teacher, and in the library of every student. Not because of their etymological statements — these are sometimes capricious; not because of any supposed superiority in their definitions; but because of their general completeness, and the literary *curiosities* which they contain — as well as to indicate my respect for a man who acted as an American pioneer in this field of letters. If I could possess but one dictionary, it should be that of Worcester. But, in conclusion, permit me to say, let a copy of the best edition of the large work of each of these authors be in the hands of every one who has an interest in our noble language, especially in the possession of every teacher, or on the shelves of the school library; let the volumes be frequently referred to, and their contents carefully noted, that the reproach of the general ignorance of our mother tongue may be no longer a disgrace to our people.

## LETTER VIII.

### READING.

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PRINTING has been styled, "the preservative art of all arts;" and *reading* what is printed is the means of communicating to the universal mind of civilized man whatever the press records.

What a leveller — perhaps I should say, what an equalizer — the capacity of reading is! No matter how lowly born, how humbly bred, how obscure the position in life of an individual, — if he can *read*, he may, at will, put himself in the best society the world has ever seen. He may sit down with the good and great men of antiquity. He may converse with Moses and the Hebrew prophets; with Jesus and his disciples; with Homer and Plato; with Shakespeare and Milton; with Fenelon and Newton; with Franklin and Washington; with all the writers in prose and poetry whose works have come down to us, and, through them, with the heroes whose deeds have become the admiration of men; with benefactors, whose acts of love and kindness to their race have proved them to be the sons of God. He may learn the lessons of wisdom that History teaches, the discoveries that Genius has achieved, the light that Science has shed on the world, and the inventions of Art by which the physical conveniences and comforts of man anticipate even his imaginary wants. He may learn how to live, — how to avoid the errors of his predecessors, and to secure blessings, present and future, to himself.

He may reside in a desert, far away from the habitations of men; in solitude, where no human eye looks upon him with affection or interest, — where no human voice cheers him with its animating tones; — if he has books, and can *read*, he needs never be *alone*. He may choose his company and the subject of conversation, and thus become contented and happy, intelligent, and wise, and good. He thus elevates his rank in the world, and becomes independent in the best sense of the term.

Reading, then, stands among the first, if not the very first, in

importance, of the departments of school education; and I propose to devote this letter to the subject of teaching it at school.\*

Pursuant to the plan I have heretofore announced, I begin with the simplest details. The first step in teaching reading has usually been that of making the pupil familiar with the alphabet, and a large majority of teachers of the present time pursue this course. There is, however, a better mode, one that is far less irksome to the little learner, and which saves time, while it brings more of his mental powers into exercise. It is that of teaching by words, — the names of things, — with a representation of the object, engraved at each word; as, *man*, *cow*, *boy*, &c., attended by the appropriate figure. Every object familiar to the child's experience will at once be recognized; and its name, spelled in letters, will soon become to him identical with the thing itself. These may be multiplied to any desirable extent, and the form of the letters be by degrees introduced to the child's acquaintance.

When, by frequent repetition, he has learned these words thoroughly, he should be put to short and simple sentences, mainly composed of them, but without the drawings. His vocabulary will by this time have become somewhat extensive; his interest will have been awakened, and he will be prepared to take hold successfully of the ordinarily repulsive task of learning the names of the letters and their various powers. These may be acquired through the assistance of blocks or cards with the names and sounds printed on them, but will be learned with more facility and pleasure by copying them with chalk on the blackboard. Rude will be the work of the child at first; but let him be encouraged, and he will rapidly improve. The object is to make something that to his apprehension is an imitation of the letter in the book; other properties will follow in their natural order.

The method of spelling the words should be by the *sounds* of the letters which combine to form them, and not by their *names*. No difficulty will be found in giving the several sounds of the vowels, and, after a little practice, those of the consonants will be easily made; and the pupil will be agreeably surprised to discover of what simple elements the consonants are composed.

The last process in learning the alphabet is that of giving each letter its original name, and no inconvenience will be experienced from thus transposing the order of study. On the contrary, the preliminary steps taken will have furnished facilities for it.

When the alphabet, with the several sounds of each letter, has been

\* So important was this part of education deemed by the Romans, that, if they wished to express their contempt of an individual, they would say of him, "He can neither swim nor read!"

perfectly learned, and the pupil begins upon new reading matter, require him, whenever he comes to a word that he cannot pronounce without spelling it, to spell by the *sound* of the letter in the case, and not by the *name*. Teach him to depend upon himself, in all cases embracing previous instruction upon the same or similar points. To prompt him, in every instance when he hesitates, is to impede healthful progress, to keep the mind feeble, and induce him always to lean on another for assistance, at the same time indulging him in a habit of mental indolence, always to be deplored.

I do not mean that a pupil is never to be told a thing but *once*; this would be preposterous. On the contrary, repetition, *repetition*, REPETITION! is the law in teaching the elements of language, as the thrice-inculcated law of Cicero, in regard to oratory, was "ACTION!" Still, I say, the pupil must *help himself*, as far as he has the ability.

A reproach to our schools, conveyed in the expression, "It was read in a *school* tone," ought not, after all that has been done for the training of teachers, to be deserved. I fear, however, that, with comparatively few exceptions, it is too well merited to justify any complaint against the charge. The fault begins in the primary school. The true idea of what reading is seems not to enter the minds of many teachers, and hence this bad habit. I understand reading to be nothing more nor less than *talking with a book in hand*. Hence it should be in practice simply an imitation of *talking*; and the very first words read, and all that follow, throughout the school life, should be given as if the sentiments were uttered in personal conversation. Instead of this, the scriptural injunction in our primary-school reading-books, "No man may put off the law of God," is usually read, No-ah — ma-an — ma-ah — poo-ut — o-off — the-ah — law-er — o-off — Go-ud. Here, then, the remedy should be applied. The child should be told to repeat the sentence without the book, and be required to go over and over again with it, until he utters it correctly. The teacher, of course, will give the proper reading of it after the pupil has made a faithful effort without success. Proceeding in this way, and never allowing an erroneous reading to pass uncorrected, the "*school* tone" will never obtain a footing in the classes.

I am aware that this will cost labor, a great deal of it; but it is worth all the labor you may find it necessary to bestow upon it. Your patience will often be severely tried, but you must never yield. Sometimes you may not be able to conquer without devoting the whole time of a class to a single individual. Never mind! Persevere! Try again at the next reading time. You will finally succeed, unless there exists in your pupil some organic defect. In such case, it would be

in the language of Job Pray, "workin' ag'in natur'," and perhaps your efforts would be unavailing. But even here, I would say, let the experiment be fairly and faithfully tried before giving up.

Akin to this is another difficulty you may have to encounter. The Irish make use of the rising inflection, in reading and speaking, in some cases, where we use the falling. With children of that nation you may find it a thing impossible to correct this habit. Inborn or inbred from the earliest period of vocal practice, it may not be possible to overcome the fault; still, I would not despair of it as a foregone conclusion, but would resolve on victory. This determination, once adopted, renders almost all things practicable.

Many writers on the subject have given *rules* for reading. They may be very well for adults, and especially for teachers; but I doubt whether, with some exceptions, they can be made very useful to inculcate on the pupil. Whatever the rules adopted in a school may be, *the pupils will read as the teacher does*, imitating all his peculiarities, whether correct or incorrect, whether beauties or deformities. He should, therefore, see to it that his own style — the paramount rule to his pupils — is the result of sound judgment and good taste.

To say that one must "keep the voice up at a comma, and let it fall at a period," and that we should "pause at a comma long enough to count one, and at a period while one might count four," is simply absurd, as invariable rules. This may be well enough in most cases, but the exceptions occur so frequently as to render the rule nugatory; and, besides, reading according to such rules would inevitably be most mechanical, stiff, inexpressive, and lifeless.

The grand, invariable rule in reading is, *read to the sense*. This involves explanation and *instruction* on the part of the teacher, which, with many, are wholly omitted. The lesson to be read should be gone over carefully by him at the time of its assignment; the obscure portions clarified, the classical, historical, political, geographical, and other allusions, explained; and the attention of the class directed to any words, difficult or uncommon, contained in the lesson. They should then be required to read it repeatedly and carefully, before the next class-time, seeking the meaning of every word they do not understand, and the proper pronunciation of those words about which they have any doubt. When they subsequently assemble for the class-reading, the teacher should examine them, to ascertain whether they retain all the facts connected with the lesson, which they are supposed to have acquired, and tell the story of the piece, in their own language, before they begin to read it from the book. They will then be prepared to do justice to the author and to themselves;

but *no one can, unless by accident, read appropriately what he does not understand.*

A good exercise in language is, to require the pupils to introduce synonymes for certain words in the lessons, to be read in the sentences in place of the original words. If these were previously indicated by the teacher, and marked by the scholar, those most suitable for the exercise might be selected, and the benefit proportionally increased.

Nothing serves better to secure the attention of the class than to allow the members to criticize each other; to do which most effectually, each one should signify, by raising the hand or other sign, that he has some error to speak of; and at the close of one pupil's portion, others, at the teacher's discretion, should be called on to make the corrections; and so on till every point has been taken up and set right. These corrections may embrace pronunciation, inflection, emphasis, the miscalling of words, tone, quantity, &c. The repetition of the portion thus criticized will furnish the means of judging to what extent the corrections have been beneficial.

I do not mean, in a foregoing remark, to say that *no* rules can be useful to the taught. There are rules, comprehensive in extent, and almost invariable in application, that may be advantageously insisted on; such, particularly, as indicate the tones of voice most appropriate to the expression of the various emotions of the mind, with appropriate rate, force, &c. These, it is true, embrace departments of the subject more advanced than many of the classes in school would readily appreciate, — those of *taste* and *feeling*; but, still, the judicious teacher need not despair of making all understand them in a reasonable time, if he have books adapted to the various capacities of the pupils.\*

That only is good reading which renders the meaning of the author clear, forcible, and expressive, — whose *tones* would indicate the nature of the subject, even when the language was not understood. And this may be attained to by very young pupils, if well taught, and made to comprehend the lesson to be read. A pleasant story, or juvenile dialogue, a child reads with great gusto, and as naturally as he would have *spoken* the parts of the characters represented, had he really been one of them himself. And why? Because he understands it, and enters into the life and action of the scene described.

\* It is to be regretted that, in many schools, notwithstanding the vast number and grades of reading-books, — many of them very good, and well adapted to the wants of the children, — the most ill-judged selections are made, if *selections* they may be called, when apparently taken without the exercise of a thought as to the appropriateness of the means to the end to be accomplished. This is an evil of magnitude, which committees ought to abate.

Any rules, then, that are promotive of such a result should be adopted and enforced. Children soon learn to comprehend the appropriate tones, rate, and force, expressive of cheerfulness, of merriment, and those of anger and scorn, and to imitate them with life-like truthfulness. They could also readily be taught to render appropriately those of affection, tenderness, pathos, sadness, grief, &c. Here, then, is a foundation for some valuable rules. Having had the nature of the piece explained to him, and being made to understand it, the pupil directly adopts the tone and manner that it requires. Is it of a pathetic character? — he reads it in a tone that excites a sympathetic feeling in others :

“ If you have tears, prepare to shed them now ! ”

“ Stay, stay with us ! Rest ! thou art weary and worn !  
And fain was their war-broken soldier to stay ;  
But sorrow returned with the dawning of morn,  
And the voice in my dreaming ear melted away ! ”

Is it an expression of strong indignation ? — he reads in well-adapted tones :

“ Ay ! down to the dust with them, slaves as they are !  
From this hour, may the blood in their dastardly veins,  
That shrunk from the first touch of Liberty’s war,  
Be sucked out by tyrants, or stagnate in chains ! ”

Is it an invocation in lofty and sublime poetry ? — he reads in steady monotone :

“ Hail, holy light ! offspring of Heaven, first born ! ”

Is it a familiar, merry ballad ? — he reads with lively voice :

“ John Gilpin was a citizen,  
Of credit and renown ;  
A train-band captain eke was he,  
Of famous London town. ”

Is it a grand, patriotic resolution that is to be expressed ? — he renders it in tones that thrill on the nerves of his hearers :

“ I know not what course *others* may take ; but as for *me*, GIVE ME LIBERTY,  
OR GIVE ME DEATH ! ”

And so of all the variety of themes and passions introduced into his reading lessons.

We know of rules, promulgated by some of the best elocutionists speaking the English language, that fail to make good readers. They



produce specimens of great artistic beauty ; they show how plastic is youthful humanity ; but they take all the *soul* out of the reading, and leave instead an image of marble, as polished and as *cold* !

I have, while writing this page, fallen, for the first time, on some lines so well adapted to my purpose, that I will venture to transcribe them. They are credited to LLOYD, and are found in Epes Sargent's excellent First Class Standard Reader, — a book admirably suited to the use of the highest class in our Grammar Schools, but not adapted to classes of a lower grade.\*

“EXPRESSION IN READING.

- . 'Tis not enough the voice be sound and clear, —  
'T is modulation that must charm the ear.  
When desperate heroines grieve with tedious moan,  
And whine their sorrows in a see-saw tone,  
The same soft sounds of unimpassioned woes  
Can only make the yawning hearers doze.
2. *That* voice all modes of passion can express  
Which marks the proper word with proper stress ;  
But none emphatic can the reader call  
Who lays an equal emphasis on *all*.
3. Some o'er the tongue the labored measures roll,  
Slow and deliberate as the parting toll, —  
Point every stop, mark every pause so strong,  
Their words like stage-processions stalk along.  
All affectation but creates disgust,  
And even in speaking we may seem *too* just.
4. In vain for them the pleasing measure flows  
Whose recitation runs it all to prose ;  
Repeating what the poet sets not down,  
The verb disjoining from the friendly noun ; †  
While pause, and break, and repetition, join  
o make a discord in each tuneful line.
5. Some placid natures fill the allotted scene  
With lifeless drone, insipid and serene ;  
While others thunder every couplet o'er,  
And almost crack your ears with rant and roar.

\* This book is prepared with great labor, good taste, and sound judgment ; and contains fifty-odd pages of “Introductory Remarks,” that few teachers could read without profit. It has, also, a copious “Explanatory Index,” of great value to pupils, if not to teachers.

† From this criticism I dissent. In a majority of instances, there must be a pause in reading, between the nominative case and the verb ; and this in proportion to the length of the nominative or nominative phrase. By it expression is improved, taste gratified, and the sense more fully developed.

6. More nature oft and finer strokes are shown  
In the low whisper than tempestuous tone ;  
And Hamlet's hollow voice and fixed amaze  
More powerful terror to the mind conveys [ ? ]  
Than he who, swollen with big, impetuous rage,  
Bullies the bulky phantom off the stage.
7. He who, in earnest, studies o'er his part,  
Will find true nature cling about his heart.  
The modes of grief are not included all  
In the white handkerchief and mournful drawl ;  
A single look more marks the internal wo  
Than all the windings of the lengthened O !  
Up to the face the quick sensation flies,  
And darts its meaning from the speaking eyes ;  
Love, transport, madness, anger, scorn, despair,  
And all the passions, all the soul, is there."

Yes, true it is, a proper modulation is the great charm in reading. Without it, whatever beauties the reader may introduce, there must be a fatal lack.

Correct pronunciation, too, is an important element in good reading ; and although, without it, the sense may be expressed and the feelings moved, much of the pleasure of the hearer is lost. A coarse style of pronouncing degrades the reader, and gives one a low idea of his breeding and his taste. Fix, therefore, on some standard, and insist on its being the guide in your teaching. Walker's has been the most generally received, for the last fifty or sixty years, and still is, in the main, the most reliable. Smart's, to which many defer, is but a slight modification of Walker's ; and Worcester's — an authority of the highest respectability — is, perhaps, the best in present use in this country, as comprising nearly all the points of importance that are fashionable among the best speakers and peculiar to the other two eminent orthoëpists mentioned.

It will cost you infinite pains to fix this pronunciation as the habit of your pupils, because, in a large proportion of the families to which they belong, a coarse style is indulged in, which will do much to neutralize the example and most strenuous efforts of the teacher. But be not discouraged. Correct every mispronunciation perpetrated in school, whether in private conversation, in class recitation, in class reading, or in elocutionary exercises. In time, you will make your *mark*, which will tell with favor and advantage on your school.

Among the errors in pronunciation, current in our community, are those of giving the sound of *a* in far for that of *a* in lad ; as in grasp, last, transport ; — giving the long sound of *a* for the short sound, in alone, above, atone, and to the article *a*, as *ā* man, *ā* book, *ā* house ; — giving

the sound of double-*o* for long *u* [ew], in attune, revolution, constitution; \* — thrusting *u* into words where it does not belong, as el~~u~~m, hel~~u~~m, whel~~u~~m, for elm, helm, whelm; — giving *er* for *o* or *ow*, in potato, fellow, window; — *aw* for *re*, in more, deplore, restore; † — *er* for *aw*, in law, raw, saw, — or rather adding *r* or *er* to the word, as lawr, law-er; — *i* for *e*, in get, yet; — *e* for *i*, in sit, stint; — *u* for *e* or *a*, in silent, reverence, repentance; — *u* for *i* short, in ability, facility; — omitting the *d* in and, and the *r*, when not initial, in almost every word; the *e* in belief, benevolent; the *h* in whig, when, what; the *e* in every, novel, counsel; the *i* in Latin, satin, certain; the *g* in present participles, reading, speaking, loving, &c.

Some of these inelegancies are so nearly universal, that persons — critics in language, too ‡ — are to be found, who would abandon the cases as hopeless, making no effort to correct the faults. To such despair the faithful teacher never yields, but, in proportion to the difficulty, nerves himself for the struggle. The faulty sound of the letter *u*, adverted to above, can be corrected, in any school, if the instructor is a man of taste and energy, and resolves in earnest that it shall be done. The same may be said of the much-wronged *r*. There is no occasion for indulging children in calling storm, *slawm*; corn, *cawn*; morn, *mawn*; — nor of pronouncing burst, first, durst, as if spelled *bust*, *fust*, *dust*.

Children in school will do what they are constantly, perseveringly, and resolutely required to do; and if these faults still adhere to them, the teacher is responsible.

Allow me to say a word as to the mechanical arrangement of your reading classes. Method, in trifles even, serves a valuable purpose, and is essential to success with the young.

If your pupils are sufficiently interested in their lessons to require no particular rank in class to induce fidelity, place them in the alphabetical order of their names. Require them always to *stand*, when reading, in a position of ease and gracefulness, the shoulders set back, the chest protruded, the book in the left hand; every eye fixed on the lesson, and, as far as possible, allow nothing to be going on in the room that may divert the attention of any member of the class. Let the lesson be announced — page, subject, author, chapter, &c. — by some one designated by the teacher, sometimes at the head, sometimes

\* This sound belongs chiefly to words in which the *u* follows *r*; as in truth, rule, ruth.

† An effectual corrective for this, in teaching, is, in such words, to require the pupil to transpose the letters *re* in pronouncing, shortening the sound of *er* a little

‡ “HERMES,” in the Boston Transcript of June 26, 1857.

at the foot, and sometimes elsewhere. And, instead of the word "Next," when another pupil is to read, call on some one by name, standing near or remote from the preceding reader, and thus, without any regular order, till the lesson is finished; sometimes returning, again and again, if you see cause, to the same individual. You will thus be sure of the attention of every one, and each will have the advantage of instruction, not in his own portion merely, but in that of every classmate.

If time should not suffice for a regular and effective drill of every member of the class, do what you can *thoroughly*; sham nothing. To teach a class in reading properly is not the job of a few minutes; it should occupy from half an hour to an hour, according to the number of members, that each one may carry away from the exercise some new thought, some item of knowledge, at every lesson. You, of course, cannot do all this, with each of your classes, every day, unless your school is under the charge of several teachers for the various departments; but—following out this plan—when a lesson is given, it will be of some value to the learners.

Several years ago, the Board of Education of Massachusetts distributed a set of questions among the school districts of the Commonwealth, for answers from the teachers; and one of them was, "How many times a day do your classes read?" I thought then, and I think now, that, if those gentlemen expected a single teacher to give instruction in anything *but* reading, in a school of the average number of pupils and classes, it was preposterous to hint that more than one reading lesson a day could be given to each class, unless where the merest elements of school studies were taught. To make accomplished readers of a school of children is a rare achievement, and can only be done by much time and patient toil, and never where, from the unreasonable expectations of the directing powers, the teacher is tempted to slur over the lessons.

I have, in these remarks, very unsatisfactorily to myself, given some views of the importance of reading, and added some notions on the mode of teaching it. I find, on review, that it has been done in an imperfect and rambling manner; and were it not given in the form of a *letter*, in which department of composition large liberty is allowed. I should hardly venture to place it on the pages of the *Journal*, whose articles generally are so superior as literary performances. My aim, however, is not at fine writing, but rather to do something to aid inexperience in the business of developing, to the best results, the various powers of the young.

## LETTER IX.

### PENMANSHIP.

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IN this age of *steam*, when utility and conservatism are often compelled to yield to pretension and hurry, irrespective of positive gain or loss to the community, no one thing connected with school education seems to have suffered more at the hands of the would-be reformers or "new lights" among the teachers of our times, than *penmanship*, or the methods of teaching it in schools. And, consequently, the handwriting of our young men is very inferior to that of the last generation, comparing like classes with like. This may be shown by comparing the signatures to the Declaration of Independence, or the names of the members of the Cincinnati, as they were enrolled at the close of the Revolutionary War, with any similar number of signatures to any public document of the present day. And yet it cannot be denied that this department of elementary education has lost nothing of its importance, either positive or relative, by the introduction into the schools of a variety of other studies, — studies unquestionably useful, but not to be pursued at the sacrifice of a good handwriting, whatever their grade or character. Men may live and thrive, occupy responsible and useful positions in society, serve their fellow-men, become good patriots, philanthropists, and Christians, and know little or nothing of geometry or physiology, but to write illegibly or badly is almost to forfeit one's respectability. Of course, there are exceptions to the rule. We all know individuals, eminent for their talents, knowledge, and position, whose handwriting is as difficult to decipher as the hieroglyphics of Egypt; men who seem to glory in this peculiarity, and who lose nothing in the public estimation from its indulgence. Still, they are not suitable examples for others, in this respect. No merchant would employ them in his counting-room; no author would choose such for amanuenses; and surely they would be the last placed in the teacher's chair.

We must, therefore, assume that it is as indispensable to *write* well as to do any other thing well. This idea was believed and practised upon until within twenty-five or thirty years ago. When what is called the "double-headed system" was universally prevalent in the public schools of the then town of Boston, the writing-master was appointed on account of his supposed dexterity in the teaching of penmanship, and no one was chosen, either master or assistant, who was not himself a good penman. And what was the consequence? The pupils of these schools became distinguished for the beauty of their chirography. They needed no better recommendation to the favor of merchants in distant cities, than to have been educated at one of them. It is true, the range of their attainments was not extensive; but what they professed to do they did well; and when they left school for the counting-room, they were prepared to enter upon the first steps of a business life, to the satisfaction of their employers, and with a rational prospect of personal success.

It must be acknowledged that this preparation was obtained at too great a cost of time and labor to the teacher, and that more occupation should have been furnished to the pupil; but let it be remembered that this was before the introduction of metallic pens into the schools, when two persons — the master and the usher — were obliged to make and mend a thousand quill pens a day in a single school; which service occupied so considerable a portion of the time as to leave but little, comparatively, for other duties. Besides, there were two large apartments in each building, one of which was devoted to instruction in Reading, Grammar, Geography, and (occasionally) Composition; and the other to Writing and Arithmetic, — a portion of the scholars attending one department in the forenoon, and the other in the afternoon — alternating between the two. But, if the very most was not made of the hours in school for the benefit of the children, a greater evil was avoided — that of an excess of lessons for study, not only in the school halls, but at the fireside at home. This evil practice has, of late, attained such a point as to threaten the health and life of the children, and to entail upon the community a race of enfeebled beings, crushed or enervated in body, by overloading and overworking the mind, while little or no physical relaxation or exercise is allowed, to neutralize the effect of the unnatural process.

In some respects the system of these schools has been improved; and most of the large towns and cities in Massachusetts have followed, or are following, the lead of the metropolis. It is well to have *one* head, and make him responsible for the condition of all the

departments; but where this last thing is not done, — where the several teachers of a large school act independently of the principal teacher, — the arrangement may prove to be a retrograde step; and this, in fact, I apprehend to be the condition of some of the schools about us and elsewhere.

But, on the particular topic under consideration, — the value of penmanship, and its present deterioration, — I have some additional remarks to make, and some views to offer, corroborative of my own, from other quarters.

EDWARD EVERETT is indebted to the public schools of Boston for his early education. His handwriting is not only perfectly legible, but neat and handsome. In one of his recent speeches, at a school-gathering in the city, he says, — alluding to the subject of writing, as taught in the days of his boyhood, — “that beautiful old Boston handwriting, which, if I do not mistake, has, in the march of innovation (which is not always the same thing as improvement), been changed *very little for the better*.” And this sentiment, divested of the Governor’s courteous manner, means, I presume, “has been changed” *very much for the worse*.

HENRY WILLIAMS (late *junior*), for seventeen years principal of the Winthrop School in Boston, and second to no one of the public teachers in the beauty of his penmanship, — acquired under the instruction of BENJAMIN HOLT, formerly of the Mayhew School, — says, in an article on Writing, in the *Massachusetts Teacher* for Nov., 1855: “Writing is an *imitative art*, which requires a careful and exact training. The eye and the hand, the taste and the judgment, are constantly employed in producing the desired result, until the hand has attained a cunning which enables it to execute, almost mechanically, every required movement. We mean that volition becomes so rapid, that execution seems, after long practice, to be but the habit of the hand; illustrated thus by Pope:

‘True ease in *writing* comes from art, not chance,  
As those move easiest who have *learned* to dance;’

affixing to ‘writing’ the technical meaning which is often assigned to it. This *art* is partly mechanical and partly a mental operation. At first the mental operation needs as much to be watched over and aided as the mechanical operation of the hand; indeed, much more. You give a child a letter to imitate. What is the process which the task involves? He observes the character, but not with the practised eye, the taste and judgment of a penman. He then attempts to put

into form and outline his own idea of the letter. The result is a feeble abortion. He tries again and again. His teacher will tell him, we think, if he is judicious, to do it slowly, until he is quite successful. Those who have had much experience in teaching young children, will credit the assertion, that it will generally require two or three years' training before the fifty-two characters of the large and small alphabets are mastered. Hurrying only retards the child's progress. After he has learned, by long and careful painstaking, to imitate these forms, he then learns to combine them; to exercise his judgment in spacing the characters; to discern the fitness of their relative lengths and proportions; and to preserve carefully an exact parallelism in their formation."

The following article, from a late Boston paper, — I know not what one, — is evidently the work of an individual well acquainted with his subject, as far as *Writing* is concerned, — although I dissent from his views of what is doing in *Arithmetic*, believing that that subject receives at least as much attention in the schools as it can fairly claim; — and I gladly avail myself of his testimony to strengthen my position :

"PENMANSHIP. — Within the present generation there has been more deterioration in penmanship than in any other branch of education. In days of yore a good, round, legible handwriting was considered indispensable to our youth; and our fathers, if they could get no more of an education, were pretty sure to understand Arithmetic as far as the Rule of Three, and to write a good hand. And we are heterodoxical enough to believe that for the practical purposes of business, that education, limited as it was, is preferable to the cramming which boys undergo now-a-days, to the neglect of chirography, and the simple rules of Arithmetic. \* \* \* \*

"Why are the writers of the present day less rapid and less legible, chirographically, than they were fifty or even twenty years ago? We answer, first, because they are not properly taught. A writing-master in the olden time always insisted upon three points — first, that the pupil should commence with, and be drilled upon, large letters, until he knew how to shape them regularly and well; secondly, that there should be a rotundity to all the letters which admit of it; and, thirdly, that the pupil, in school, should always write slowly.\*

\* The *third* point was a school axiom fifty years ago, and was embodied in the distich,

"Learn to write *slow*; all other graces  
Will follow in their proper places." — T.



“Now mark the consequence of such teaching. The pupil made straight marks until he could make really straight ones, and write them parallel to each other. Then he was advanced to curve letters, and finally to those letters combined of straight lines and curves. He was required to consume an hour in writing his copy of twelve lines, or one line in five minutes. By this slowness his eye became accustomed to form. After writing single letters, he was taught to write words, and then sentences, and for the first year or two he was kept exclusively upon what the schoolmasters call large hand. Then he was allowed to write copies of a medium hand, and finally of fine hand.

“No flourishing was then allowed upon copy-books. Boys were not taught to draw ornithological specimens with the pen, nor to use the pen for any other than its proper purpose. They, therefore, came from school legible penmen. Of course the reader will ask what is the cause of more illegibility in penmanship now? We propose to answer.

“Some ten or fifteen years ago a new race of writing-masters appeared on the stage, who proposed to make their pupils exchange a very bad for a very good style of writing in from ten to twenty lessons. They called their systems by inappropriate names, such as ‘anti-angular,’ and the like. For a time they claimed to be, and on the surface appeared to be, successful. Their systems, mainly professing to be anti-angular, were peculiarly a combination of straight marks and very acute angles, so as to destroy the proper rotundity of the letters. An incautious observer, from the pains that they took to make their pupils observe *size* in the formation of the letters, would say that their handwriting looked better after the twenty lessons than before; but, if he would attempt to read it, he would find the new hand more illegible than the old.

“Multitudes were duped in this manner, and, having expended their money and their time, soon after relapsed into the old hand which they had previously acquired, and such did not again trouble the writing-masters who teach in a very few lessons. That experience taught the people, what they ought to have discovered by a little reflection, that chirography is a mechanical art, and needs long-continued practice to make its subject a good penman. To make a bad penman into a good one, in from ten to twenty, or even in a hundred lessons, is precisely similar to giving a boy a skilful use of the plane in just so many hours. Nay, worse than that; for the plane can be skilfully managed by an eye competent to judge of smoothness alone; but the penman must appreciate size, form, regularity,

and beauty. Unless he does all this, his penmanship will be poor; and he must not only appreciate these qualities, but be able to execute them in his copy. Talk of imparting this in twenty lessons! The proposition is simply absurd. If he has a correct taste and a fancy for chirography, he will get a good handwriting by years of attention, and then he may write fast without writing illegibly. There is no shorter road to good penmanship, maugre the pretensions of quacks and sciolists."

Another reason for the falling off in the quality of the writing of the present day is, I apprehend, a low estimate of its value in the minds of those who appoint the teachers.\* If the candidate is found to be what is called a "good scholar," deficiency in penmanship is hardly considered a bar to his election; although to write well is as essential a qualification in a good teacher of a common school, as proficiency in any one of the studies embraced in the school course. There should be an acknowledged standard by which to determine merit in this important branch of learning. The spirits of the past renowned penmen of England and our own country should be evoked, — Champion, Milne, Tileston, Carter, Fox, the Webbs, Holt, and others, possessed like them of undisputed skill in teaching and executing good writing. If candidates for places could make no approach to a good degree of skill like theirs, they should not be chosen. Let the voice of the community resolutely demand this, and it would be forthcoming. It is attainable by most of those who wish to become teachers, — on the condition of determined resolution and perseverance; and they who are unable or unwilling thus to secure it, would do well to adopt some other sphere of labor.

In pointing out the details in the method of teaching penmanship, I should accept most of the sentiments and suggestions quoted above from the Boston newspaper, not only for their being time-honored, but because they are consonant with methods that have been found

\* It is possible that our fathers exaggerated the worth of good writing; but the effect of their estimate of it on the young was highly beneficial. It excited their enthusiasm and their most earnest efforts, while they wrote, as one of their "pieces" for "Selectmen-day," in a style of perfect beauty:

"Three things bear mighty sway with men:  
The Sword, the Sceptre, and the Pen;  
Who can the least of these command,  
In the first rank of Fame shall stand!"

A revival of a portion of this spirit would be a decided improvement on the now prevalent apathy on the subject.

successful wherever they have been steadily practised. As in Drawing, so in Writing, the straight line should constitute the first lesson, and should be practised till the pupil can form it perfectly. He should have a clear and distinct model of what he is to imitate, from the first mark to the last lesson in finished penmanship. Let the strokes be made in pairs, thus: // <sup>1</sup>; it will aid him to secure perfect parallelism, or equality of slope. This accomplished, the stroke with a curve at the bottom follows, thus: *l* <sup>2</sup>; next, the first element of the small *n*, thus: *o* <sup>3</sup>; then the second element, thus: *z* <sup>4</sup>; next the *o* <sup>5</sup>; then the *j* <sup>6</sup>. He is now prepared to practise on the *o* and all the letters formed from the *o*, — *a*, *d*, *g*, *q* <sup>7</sup>. Let him next practise on all the letters whose elements he has become familiar with, namely, *a*, *d*, *g*, *h*, *i*, *j*, *l*, *m*, *n*, *o*, *p*, *t*, *u*, *y* <sup>8</sup>; dividing them into several portions for practice; and, finally, the others, which are more or less irregular: as, *b*, *c*, *e*, *f*, *k*, *r*, *s*, *v*, *w*, *x*, *z*, *S* <sup>9</sup>, also broken into divisions.

Having thus mastered the small alphabet, he may pass to the capitals, <sup>10</sup> either broken up into their elements, or taken whole in their alphabetical order. If the drilling up to this point has been successful, he may attempt the full-formed capitals at once. After sufficient practice on the single letters, small and large, he is prepared for combinations. Let him then join an *m* to each of the other letters of the alphabet, as *am*, *bm* <sup>11</sup>, &c., following this combination with a still further practice of the *m* connected with each of the other letters, large and small, thus: *Amma*, *Bmma* <sup>12</sup>, &c. This method, well persevered in, will have prepared him for what teachers call joining, <sup>13</sup> or joining hand; in it we begin to introduce in the copies sentiment, facts in History, Geography, Art, Chronology, as far as it can be done in a single line, and make it the vehicle of important scraps of knowledge, which the pupil inevitably stores away in his memory, for use in all future time.

And here it may not be amiss to say that, on taking up *joining*, you should insist on attention to everything in the copy; not merely the dotting of the *i*'s, and crossing the *t*'s, but to the punctuation, —

<sup>1</sup> This may be called No. 1 in the series of copies; <sup>2</sup> this No. 2; <sup>3</sup> No. 3; <sup>4</sup> No. 4; <sup>5</sup> No. 5; <sup>6</sup> No. 6; <sup>7</sup> No. 7; <sup>8</sup> No. 8; <sup>9</sup> No. 9; <sup>10</sup> No. 10; <sup>11</sup> No. 11; <sup>12</sup> No. 12; <sup>13</sup> No. 13.

allowing no comma, apostrophe, admiration mark, question, or other point due, to be omitted. Although this may not, strictly speaking, belong to the teaching of penmanship, it should not be separated from it when thought is to be expressed in what is written; and the injunction is introduced here because of the very general neglect of the matter in the schools.

Require, also, the name of the writer, with the date, correctly pointed, too, to be placed at the foot of every page in the writing-book.

After a practice continued till the principles are mastered in all the relations into which they may be introduced, let the medium hand<sup>14</sup> be attempted, with little variation in the style of the letters, excepting in the size. Next the fine hand,<sup>15</sup> which is that of the ordinary business of practical life.

As nothing acquired by teaching and training can be long retained but by careful practice, a general system of (so to call them) reviews should be adopted; thus: when No. 1 of the series of copies has been well mastered, let it be still practised on the left-hand page of the copy-book, and No. 2 be commenced on the right; this conquered, let No. 3 take the place of No. 2 on the right, and No. 2 fall back to the left-hand page; and thus onward, till No. 13 — the large joining hand — be reached. Let the copies be arranged alphabetically, and the whole alphabet be carried through several times before the next grade — the medium hand — is undertaken, and this in like manner till fine hand be introduced; the same order of grading as before still continued — large hand on the right, to half-joining (No. 12) on the left; medium on the right to large on the left; and fine on the right to medium on the left. In this manner all that the pupil gains is retained, and the whole system held together as by the links of a chain.

The use of the pencil and slate precedes that of the pen; and, generally, the form of the figures used in numbers is learned before writing with a pen is begun. But, if you would have these figures finished with taste and beauty, let them be included in your regular lessons in the copy-books. And, to secure this with certainty, let, say, every eighth page be devoted to figures; and, if you do not "set the copies" in the books yourself, let the books, when new, be marked with an F on one side of every fourth leaf, that the figure copies may not be forgotten. If the pupils in your school who write are few, set the copies for them. They will enjoy it, and strive the more to

<sup>14</sup> No. 14; <sup>15</sup> No. 15.

imitate your style, and will doubtless improve the faster for it. But if the writers are too numerous for this, write the copies, — don't use engraved ones, — as well as possible, on slips of paper pasted to card or pasteboard; and require the pupil, when writing, to point the fore finger of the left hand at every letter or figure before attempting to make it himself, and he can hardly fail to write like his teacher.

If your own writing should not satisfy you as a model, procure sets of the old Boston slips, even though engraved.

We have thus run over all the steps in the order of the lessons; and general and business-like practice is now to follow. Portions of well-selected poetry may occasionally, at this stage, take the place of the single-line copies, intermitting with mercantile forms, such as Receipts, Bills of Parcels, Notes of Hand in variety, Bills of Exchange, Accounts Current, Invoices, &c., in general use, every step in which will tend to qualify the boy for what he will have occasion to know and to use, on emerging from the school-room and entering on the career of manhood. If convenient, it would be well to have some instruction and practice with the pen in the various kinds of printing; at least, as far as the large and small letters in Roman and Italic are concerned;\* and would often be found of important use on leaving school.

In sitting to write, the left side of the body should be partially turned toward the table, desk, or form, touching it gently, but not pressing it, while the right arm should be drawn nearly to the other side of the body. The pen should be held with some degree of freedom under and between the nail of the thumb and that of the second finger, while the fore finger falls upon the pen to steady it and aid in guiding its motion; the first and second fingers to be kept as nearly straight as practicable; the thumb to be bent. The third and fourth fingers should rest, partially bent, under the others, for their support, yet permitting the latter to play easily over them; and the top of the pen should incline toward the shoulder, thus bringing the nib to press squarely on the paper.

With *beginners* it is essential to insist on a uniform observance of this manner of holding the pen. It is deemed by persons of experience, teachers and non-teachers, to be the true method, approving itself to taste as well as to utility. But if pupils, when first falling under your care, have already, by the indulgence of years in bad habits of holding the pen, rendered the task of correcting them nearly

\* This was done in the schools half a century ago, with the addition of German Text and Old English.

hopeless,—especially if they have acquired a good handwriting,—it is better to allow them to continue holding it in the way that has become to them the easiest and most successful, lest an attempt to improve it should impair the quality of their writing. We have sometimes found persons holding the pen in the most ungraceful and awkward fashion, and yet writing elegantly, who, on being required to adopt the legitimate mode, have degenerated into a stiff and graceless style.

I have, thus far, spoken only of writing in copy-books; but the addition of lessons and practice on the black-board would prove a very effective auxiliary. As far as your school arrangements will admit of it, teach in *classes*. Standing in front of the board, write the model in large, fair characters, and require as many pupils as the board will accommodate to imitate it. Others may use their slates for the purpose. Call upon the members of the class to criticize each other's work, and add your own summing up, with reasons for your statements. Guard particularly against the most common faults, such as joining the *o* in the wrong place, or not joining it at all; [it should invariably be joined on the right-hand side, so that when changed into an *a*, *d*, *g*, or *q*, the point of connection may not be visible;] making the lower turn of the *m*, *n*, &c., much broader and thicker than the upper; the loop of the *y*, *j*, &c.,—which is rarely symmetrical with beginners,—too long, or too short, too full, or too narrow, and often having the double curve of the *f*, instead of the single one of the *j*; separating the parts of the *n*, *h*, *p*, &c., instead of carrying the hair stroke from the first shade to the second, &c.; making the stem of the *p*, *q*, &c., either sharp at one end, and square at the other, or both of them sharp,—they should be perfectly *square*; taking the pen from the paper, between two letters connected by a hair-stroke, as in *an*, &c.

Constant vigilance, and continual correction of errors, are indispensable to the formation of a good hand. To know how to execute well, then, is the first grand requisite in the teacher; the next, to furnish good models; and the third, to have a quick eye to detect faults, and a persistent determination for their correction. These conditions existing, and the principle carried out, your pupils *will write well*, with a reasonable amount and duration of practice.

This course is recommended for those who have the privilege of attending school during the years usually devoted to school education.

For those whose school-days are few, — who are to be withdrawn to assist in domestic or other employment, or for some cause that cannot be overruled by the teacher or the school-directors, — a briefer method must be adopted; a method that has little to recommend it, but which is better than nothing in the way of learning this valuable art. It consists in writing, from the start, simple and single words, on a slate, and requiring the pupil to imitate them, without the gradual steps indicated above; copying the same words over many times, as well as possible, and advancing, according to his skill, to more and more difficult words, until he is able to form them into sentences, and read them himself. He will then be prepared, to some extent, to write on paper; and may at once begin upon *joining*, in a book prepared for the purpose. It will not be expected that pupils will, with so imperfect a mode of training, become elegant penmen; nor even, excepting in some few rare instances, attain to a style above mediocrity; but they will acquire, under a faithful teacher, who believes in the importance of a means, though an imperfect one, of communicating thought, an inestimable prize; and no one, if his stay at school should be limited to a single year, or even less, should fail of the opportunity of turning this little to the best account. And, in order that time should not be lost, the fact should be ascertained, on the boy's entering school, whether he is intended to continue for a long period or a short one, that the course of instruction best suited to the circumstances may be adopted for him. For want of such information in advance, boys, in our cities particularly, often leave school destitute of a sufficient amount of instruction to enable them to write their names.

To secure the best results for the members of your school, will, I doubt not, be your earnest aim. And, whether their stay with you be longer or shorter, you should strive to imbue them with a resolution to excel. Your own efforts will produce little fruit without their coöperation. Good writing comes not from careless habits, but from a laborious, constant, painstaking, earnest imitation of suitable models. Such models being furnished, perhaps the whole matter might be embraced in the simple words of the trite copy-slip, "*Imitate the copy.*"





## LETTER X.

### GEOGRAPHY.

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WHETHER the absurd method of teaching Geography, which obtained in the early part of the present century, is now practised to any considerable extent, or not, in our country, is matter of conjecture. In districts remote from educational centres, where few if any conventions of teachers are held, and opportunities for comparing views among members of the fraternity are rare, improvements are tardily introduced, and the traditional modes of a less enlightened day, are, in such localities at least, doubtless adhered to. The memoriter lesson is marked, "Get from *here* to *here*," and, the language learned and recited "word for word like the book," according to order, the pupil is dismissed with approbation,—"*perfect*, not having missed a word." Ay; he had missed no *word*; but what *ideas* has he acquired? What has he learned of the form of the countries; their relative positions on the earth; the habits of their people; their productions, climate, and so forth? Can he give you any rational account of any of these? Is he able to describe the form of the territory, or its surroundings? Can he indicate the direction of it from his own home, or answer any of the numerous inquiries that the subject naturally suggests to the mind?

When we confine ourselves to the strict and meagre definition of the word geography,—a description of the earth,—we exclude a large amount of valuable knowledge, which is so intimately connected with geography, as to be claimed as part and parcel with it; or—if this is saying too much—should, at any rate, be studied along with it.

There is not, perhaps, in the whole range of studies introduced into our schools, one so suggestive as that of geography; a study which so naturally introduces so extensive a circle of connected subjects; subjects that can more appropriately and naturally be taken up with geography than by themselves or in any other connection. Geography, therefore, needs to be *taught*; and, without wholly discarding the text-book, the subject should exist mainly in the teacher's

mind, that, having drawn, as it were, the *text* from the book, the discourse upon it should emanate from the living soul of the instructor. Thus, and thus only, as it seems to me, can that life and spirit be imparted to it so indispensable to infuse the principle of reality.

Hence, there exists a necessity, more or less pressing, for introducing, in these Letters, some account of what may, perhaps, be considered a better method than that of our fathers.

The most effectual way of teaching geography, unquestionably, is to visit the spot of earth under consideration, and *there* make it the subject of inspection, remark and explanation. No description in language can equal this, nor convey to the mind of the learner any conception of the reality to be compared to it. Next to this is the seeing of the figure of it in material form, with due proportions preserved,—the larger the better,—with all the variety introduced that belongs to the original, as far as the size of the copy will admit. Next, a drawing of the same, including all the lines and boundaries, representing countries, districts, cities, seas, rivers, lakes, mountains, &c.

Proceeding in this order, then,—first by personal inspection, second by the artificial globe, and third by maps,—we are prepared for the filling up of language, describing to the learner whatever he may not fully comprehend, and furnishing such information respecting the productions, people, climate, government, and institutions of the region, as are most important to be known.

We will suppose, then, that there is in the school-room an artificial globe, to which the attention of all the pupils is to be called, and the representation of its great natural divisions of land and water pointed out; first, so far as the “four quarters of the globe” are concerned, and the oceans and seas connected therewith. This is as far, perhaps, as the subject could be successfully unfolded to all classes and all ages and grades of mind in the school at once.

The lowest class, or beginners in the study, should now be taught the definitions of the names of the simplest objects,—land and water,—the pupils, at the same time, sketching them, one by one, on their slates or paper,—the teacher having first given their forms and names on the black-board. If the learners first copy the figures from the teacher’s drawings, there can be no objection. Many would, doubtless, need this assistance, particularly the very young, at the start. There is no injury done to them by this kind of aid. It is necessary only to stop short of the point where the child’s mind and thought are to be principally exercised. At first he will and must be an imitator. Nay, the same instruction must be again and again repeated.

To say that the child is "stupid" will never enlighten him. It may, and doubtless will, mortify him, perhaps discourage him, and excite a spirit of anger or dislike towards the teacher. But great consideration must be exercised towards children, whose stock of ideas is very scanty, and who are entitled to, not only a large extension of patience on the part of the teacher, but of encouragement also.

When the lesson — which should be a short one — has occupied a sufficient amount of time and attention, the black-board should be sponged clean, and the sketches of the pupils be removed from slates and papers. The catechetical exercise should follow; and, as the pupil answers the question, "What is a cape?" he should be required to draw it on the black-board. It will be found useful, at first, mnemonically, to present certain questions in pairs, — giving those relating to land divisions along with the similar ones in connection with the water, — as an island and a lake; a small island and a pond; a cape and a bay; a sea and a continent, &c.

When these simple terms for natural divisions have been fully mastered, so as to be known by sight and name, the child should commence map-drawing. Let it begin with his own play-ground or house-lot, extended to the public square, mall, common, or other well-known enclosure in his neighborhood, and thus carried on till the town or village is pictured before him. If he is capable of it, he should be required to introduce the various mountains, hills, rivers, lakes, ponds, brooks, &c., that are embraced within the limits of the sketch; but this would usually be too much to expect from beginners. Encourage him to attempt all that he can be reasonably expected to accomplish; but nothing more than he can comprehend and explain.

As he advances in grade, he will be able, with similar leading of the teacher, to give the outline of the State in which he lives. This, like the first step, may be made a very interesting class exercise. Let, for example, the subject be the State of Massachusetts. One boy gives, on the black-board, the form of the whole territory; the next is directed to mark the most easterly county; another the next in course; and so on to the most westerly. The most southerly is then described, followed by the next onward toward the north, till the most northerly is indicated. The members of the class are then called on for criticisms, and any one who detects an error in the form or locality of any county, is sent to the board to correct it.

The rivers, mountains, and cities or large towns, are then "located" in the same way; and, if appropriate instruction has been previously given, questions may be put as to the peculiarities of any of them, — as the heights of the mountains; the character of the

rivers—whether navigable, or not; whether used for power in manufacturing, or otherwise; whether affording fish, or not, and what varieties;—and of the cities, as for what, of a remarkable nature, they are distinguished. These details, and others in variety, will, however, as a general thing, be found better adapted to a more advanced stage in the course. But, as far as is attempted, all should be done thoroughly; the exercise to be repeated, from time to time, till every member of the class is familiar with every part of the lesson, and each one can draw the whole, with a good degree of accuracy, from memory.

It is well for the pupil to fix in his mind the resemblance which any country or district of country bears to any object with which he is familiar; as Italy, in the form of a boot; South America, resembling a shoulder of mutton; and the like. Let this resemblance be real or fancied, it will aid him in his task.

When the pupils shall, by this method, have caught the inspiration from the teacher, they may be furnished with an engraved skeleton or outline map, selected at the teacher's discretion, for practice by themselves. Much time, which would otherwise, perhaps, be lost or wasted in idleness, may be thus occupied in filling it up, improving their knowledge of geography, and their style of writing and printing, at the same time.

Some schools that I have known have, by a similar course, become remarkably expert in map-drawing,—securing accuracy of form and proportion, as well as beauty of coloring and penmanship, in the various styles of chirography and pen-printing.\*

The other States of the Union may be taken up in the same way, followed by a combination of the New England States; the Middle, the Southern and Western; and, finally, making a grand review of the United States, in one map. Frequent reviews, from point to point, would be necessary to keep the mind familiar with the ground gone over.

Before proceeding further with the American continent, it would be well to cross the Atlantic, and take up the British Islands; sketch the outline of Great Britain, and fill up, as on this side of the water. Thence, cross the Channel to the continent of Europe; make an outline of the whole, and divide the countries as was done by the counties in the lesson on the State of Massachusetts. Subsequently, draw the countries separately, and practise upon them till the form of each one becomes as familiar to each pupil's eye as that of his

\* That of William B. Fowle, of Boston, especially.

native State. The remainder of the American continent should follow, with the islands along its coasts. Then Africa and Asia. Every region has its points of interest, but a careful discrimination should be exercised, and time and labor be given to those portions of the world a knowledge of which would prove most satisfactory, agreeable, improving, and useful. To devote much time to crowding the memory with many of the names of places in Africa, for instance, which one would scarcely meet with, except in a treatise on Geography, in the whole subsequent course of his life, would hardly be a wise appropriation of time and study.\*

Europe, in its various divisions of Northern, Southern, Central, &c., concentrating so many specimens of grandeur, beauty, natural curiosities and interesting phenomena, and presenting, in its historical records, such a storehouse of the wonderful, the heroic, the patriotic, the scientific, the brave, the self-sacrificing, and the patiently enduring, — besides having been the home of our fathers, — will naturally be found the most attractive and interesting to the learner, of the various foreign regions of the world. He should therefore dwell longest upon, and make himself best acquainted with, that portion of the world; and, as I have before intimated, should be directed by the teacher, as he is mapping out the different parts of Europe, either as countries, districts, or cities, to the birthplaces of the world's benefactors; the scenes of their labors, their sufferings, or their glory. He should remember the good of all creeds, — Plato and Aristides, Brutus and the Gracchi, Alfred and Charlemagne, Gustavus Vasa and William Tell, Laplace and Humboldt, Shakspeare and Milton, Newton and Wilberforce, Fennel and Jenner, and Hannah More and Grace Darling, and Mrs. Frye and Florence Nightingale, — omitting none of either sex, wherever humanity demands a notice of them.

Palestine and other parts of Asia will also readily attract his attention, and the scenes in which the patriarchs and prophets of the

\* It is not indispensable that the precise order of the maps attempted, as above indicated, should be invariably followed. There may be a better arrangement. In some atlases a convenient and rational order is laid down; and if outline maps, adapted to them, can be had, they will prove an important gain to the learner. My object is to secure a rational and regularly progressive order, which with some is sacrificed to inadequate considerations.

It would be nearly, if not quite, impossible for the pupil, in the usual time devoted to school education, to draw a map or maps of every considerable portion of the globe, without injustice to other studies. It is, therefore, proper to begin with those in which we have the greatest interest, or with whose inhabitants we cherish friendly or business relations. After this suggestion, the teacher's own reflection will be a sufficient guide.

Hebrews took part, and those which were rendered sacred and memorable by the establishment of the Christian religion and the attendant "mighty works" and sufferings of its great Head,—Bethlehem, Nazareth, Jerusalem, Capernaum, Mounts Zion and Tabor, and the Mount of Olives,—all these should be pointed out. The birthplace of Paul; the isle of Patmos, where John closed his long and memorable life; and whatever else of equal interest is known concerning these and other distinguished men, who figured in the sacred history and geography of their times.

In sketching the maps of our own country, the same course should be pursued, and the pupil's attention drawn not only to the birthplaces of the great and good men who have lived and left examples behind for our benefit and imitation, but also to the spots consecrated by their deeds, or by their blood shed in the cause of national freedom, as Lexington, Bunker Hill, Yorktown, Saratoga, Trenton, Long Island. These, with their heroes and martyrs, should be commemorated. Mere military success I should not deem sufficient cause to "make a note of;" but in other countries, as well as in our own, where victory in battle had enabled an oppressed people to throw off the yoke of tyranny, or assist in setting a nation free, I would direct the attention of the learner to it, and to the leading spirits of the struggle. And this would introduce such places as Marathon, Thermopylæ, and Bannockburn.

If it be objected that this is *history* or *biography*, I reply, that no better auxiliary to the teaching of geography can be introduced than those facts and men, which places on the earth bring to the mind, when they are truly memorable in themselves. I would further maintain that geography and history should not be separated, but be always taught and studied together. One assists in acquiring and retaining the memory of the other, and both increase in interest from the union.

The teacher may throw in many a useful word to his pupils in their process of map-drawing, especially in regard to the ridges or chains of mountains in the several continents—how they follow, in their direction, apparently, one particular law or rule in one hemisphere, and a different one in another; so that an observant eye may distinguish the country to which the mountains belong, simply by the direction and relations of the mountains themselves. So in regard to the course of rivers, whose tendencies are in uniform directions in neighboring localities. The teacher will here indicate the cause of this, and also, when their directions vary, state what is the cause of such variation.

The pupil observes, that, in some parts of the world, there are but

few rivers. He may not speak of this, but should have the reason for the fact stated to him. He finds, too, that in some countries there is little or no rain; in others, a great deal; and in others still, periodical seasons of rain, lasting for months together. Tell him why it is so. Also, the causes of the trade winds, whose operations seem so wonderful, and yet are made so subservient to the welfare of the mercantile world.

Let him know something of longitude and latitude, and, as soon as he is able to comprehend their meaning, give him simple problems, to test the utility of this knowledge. In travelling, he hears his father say his watch is too slow, and that they are about two hundred miles from home, in an easterly direction. Ask him the longitude of the place, and if he knows the longitude of his own residence, he will say it is  $—^{\circ}$ , or about three degrees less than at his own home, and that the watch is twelve minutes slow. Or, he has travelled in an opposite direction about ninety miles, and his watch is fast, and he may perceive and say that the watch is fast six minutes, and the longitude is one and a half degrees greater than at his own residence. He reads in a newspaper that a ship has been spoken at sea, in a given latitude and longitude, and, turning to a map covering that point, he will see just where the vessel was, at the particular hour when she was seen and spoken.

Tell him, at this stage of his progress, that while we measure the sun's *time* east and west, we reckon his degree of *heat* north and south. Hence he will perceive that, in going from this latitude towards the north pole, the cold will continually increase; and that in travelling in the opposite direction, till he reaches the equator, the heat increases in a similar ratio. Give him next some account of the zones, and the causes of the varied temperature in each. Direct his attention to the productions of these widely-differing portions of the globe. He will perceive that they are distinctly marked in every department of creation, — man, beast, reptile, bird, vegetable, fruit, flower, — and that the production of one zone is rarely found living or growing spontaneously within another, excepting in contiguous or proximating parts. Tell him where to look for the strong, industrious, intelligent, matter-of-fact man, who earns his subsistence and makes the world happier by his labor; and show him that the animals, the fruits, and the vegetable productions of that zone partake of qualities adapted to just that race of men.

The same may be said of the others. Where the physical wants of man are few, little in the way of labor is required of him. Excessive heat abates his strength, and nature feeds and clothes him from

her ample storehouse. She feasts him on her luscious fruits, regales his ear with her rich music, fascinates his eye with her gorgeous coloring, and ravishes his smell with her exquisite odors.

In others, again, — in the colder portions, — where little grows or can grow, the inhabitants are few, and they become inured to hardship, and do but little else than perform the natural functions which carry them through a brief and precarious existence. The few brute animals and vegetable productions thereof, partake of the same low grade of properties and qualities, and exhibit a rigid adaptation to what may be termed the law of the climate.

Hence, the pupil may be led to know what to expect from man, beast, fruit, and flower, by ascertaining the part of the globe — mainly the latitude — in which they are found. Taking a list of the districts of a country, cities, and large towns, and comparing them, the known with the unknown, a pretty correct idea may be formed of the temperature and natural productions of each; the probable vigor, effeminacy, and habits of the people. This rule is not to be taken without limitation, for modifications, more or less considerable, are produced by circumstances, which should be pointed out by the teacher.

An agreeable mode of giving a practical character to this part of our subject, and one that is adopted in some schools, is, for the teacher to read from a mercantile newspaper some of the various advertisements of the merchants, making them texts to be commented upon, and to form the basis of a catechetical exercise. Here we read of tea, gunny bags, saltpetre, mace, sumac, spelter, coffee, indigo, cassia, opium, sugar, hemp. Now the question is, first, Whence came they? or, in more familiar language, Where did they come from? This question may be followed by others, in variety, to any extent that the time of the teacher will permit; as, Where is the *place*? is it a city? an island? *what* is the article advertised? what are other productions of the same place or country? the habits of the people? their history? their government? the population of their chief cities? their religion? &c.; bringing out more thought and imparting more information than the same amount of time could do in almost any other course. I am aware that the lack of *time* would not allow every teacher to indulge himself and his school, to any great extent, in this interesting and useful exercise; but still, in my judgment, if but fifteen minutes daily were to be thus appropriated, the advantage to the school would be great, and the good effects on the *families* represented therein would be strikingly observable. How many persons there are, on all sides of us, that have not the slightest idea, even, of the countries which produce the most common articles of daily domestic consump-



tion or use, and even the meaning of the names of many articles constantly advertised in commercial papers! What is learned at school is usually talked about at home; and especially any new idea about *things*, that comes to the learner in a pleasant way, without the formality of an assigned task, and, consequently, without study.

In connection with this exercise, the routes usually pursued by navigators to and from the several ports, from which the articles of commerce, that become the subject of conversation, are imported, would be found a matter of curiosity and interest; and I believe none of our school-books in present use refer to the subject at all. I do not complain of this, but would recommend to the teacher to introduce it along with this miscellaneous exercise, as sure to give much satisfaction to the inquiring minds among his pupils. Caleb Bingham, the best teacher that Boston had in his time, had some questions and answers of this kind, in his little work, called *The Geographical Catechism*, which in my childhood was a great favorite with me, and whose impression, although many a long year has passed since I studied it as a class-book, is still vivid and pleasant in my memory.

Among other facilities for illustrating the subject of geography, are the raised maps, or maps in relief, representing the inequalities of the surface of the earth. These maps are found highly useful with the advanced classes of a school, whose members are capable of comprehending the scale of comparison introduced, and always fix and reward their attention. They are confined principally to mountainous countries, but are not without interest when typifying those that are comparatively flat. Several have been imported, representing Italy, Switzerland, Europe, Germany and the Netherlands, France and Belgium, Mont Blanc and environs, and others,—whose most prominent mountains can be easily recognized by those who have travelled in the several countries, and have felt a sufficient interest in the subject to ascend their grand elevations, and institute comparisons between them. Those of the greatest altitudes loom up, even in these miniature models, with a degree of grandeur not readily anticipated, when the scale on which they are necessarily projected for school uses is considered; and they challenge the admiration of the young student, as, assisted by them and his own imagination, he climbs their snowy tops, and looks, almost giddy, into the vales below.

In some portions of a country denominated “hilly,” the surface of the map is little more irregular than the outside of an orange; while that of others, like Mont Blanc, presents very striking elevations.

Thus, from the ordinary hill to the lofty peaks of the Alps, a careful, and, apparently, correctly-graduated scale, is adopted and followed throughout. Every teacher, therefore, who can command a set of these maps, would find great utility in their use.

They might be used to advantage in connection with the engraved classification of mountains, found in many school atlases.

The mere learning by rote of the names and heights of mountains, of the elevations and depressions from the surface of the sea of various territories, can make no impression on the mind to compare in permanency with what is acquired through the medium of the eye, assisted by the judgment; and hence these maps have claims superior to the other means of instruction and illustration, which have usually been found in the schools.

I have purposely avoided making the discriminations of Physical, Mathematical, and Political geography, because I wished to range freely and at large over the wide field embraced in the general subject; and because I believe that, in traversing the surface of the globe, unfettered by technicalities or rigid rules, I could appropriately touch upon any topic having near relations to the soil, and what it is producing, or has produced, worthy of being known to the young. Method is well, and there are studies which require a rigorous adherence to it, and particularly as the student advances in years and mental capacity; but, as I wander with my pupil, for a peripatetic lesson, and call his attention to the flower by the wayside, the rock of the crag, or the lofty tree of the forest, so, in the survey of the crust of the planet we inhabit, I cannot willingly pass specimens of the striking, the noble, or the instructive, without endeavoring to turn it to a profitable account.

We cannot make the school-boy's task too agreeable. There is no danger that he will not have labor enough, and vexation enough, and confinement to his books and the school-room sufficient to exercise all his patience and temper, his memory, his reasoning powers, and his physical endurance,—give him what auxiliaries we may. And this should always be borne in mind. The work that he is capable of doing I would require of him; but whatever of sunlight can be thrown in upon his path of intellectual toil should not be withheld. He will then not only acquire more, and comprehend what might otherwise be obscure in his mind, but will *enjoy* as he labors, and thus be encouraged to press on to higher and nobler attainments, urged by his own wishes and feelings, rather than by the requisitions of those who direct him. This is not only desirable for the pupil's sake, but changes the teacher's task to a delightful recreation.

## LETTER XI.

### REWARDS AND PRIZES.

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THE subject of this letter is REWARDS IN SCHOOLS, as among the means to be introduced to secure the best results of school-education in the most genial, natural, and agreeable manner; to which I shall add some remarks on excessive school-study.

The transcendental idea that the young are to study for the love of knowledge, or from a sense of duty, has of late gained many converts in our community; but I shall endeavor to show, — how agreeable soever it may be to influence, control, or direct, by such considerations alone, — that, in large schools, especially with the very young, other motives must be appealed to. It cannot be reasonably supposed that a thing so unnatural to children as confinement in a school-room, in constrained, long-continued, and perhaps fatiguing positions, with little change or variety, is to be made tolerable by the annunciation of an abstract principle; particularly when the tasks imposed are as unattractive as the confinement. Children, like the young of other animals, delight in action. The kitten, the kid, the lamb, the colt, in their unrestrained habits of playing, gambolling, and bounding, symbolize children in a state of nature. Left to the exercise of their innate tendencies, they are found as buoyant and frisky as the young of the irrational creation. Most of the smaller birds never *walk*; but when in motion on foot always run or *trip*. So as a general thing with children, especially boys; when abroad, free, and left to their own choice, they seldom walk, but move with a sort of *skip*. Hence, we perceive the propriety and importance of measures that may call them out of this, their normal state, without violence to the instincts with which they come into life, and awaken an interest in objects and employments for which they have, with few exceptions, little or no natural propensity. How, then, is this to be done? Of course, we admit that there is, in most families, some degree of order, system, or discipline, to which the little ones are expected to submit; and to which they do render what is considered submission, although

in various degrees, from the legitimate and prompt obedience of the olden time, down to what some disciplinarians would deem insurrection. This amounts to something, however little, in the preparation of the children for school. The animal buoyancy of the young being is, to some extent, checked. He is partially prepared for the most urgent of the school requisitions, and, in time, comes to look upon the scene of his daily life as other than a prison. Still, many things are to be introduced before it becomes to him a place of happiness or even of content. The kindness and parental consideration of the teacher are, undoubtedly, the most potent general influence, — the first to be exercised, and the last to be surrendered. If the room is sufficiently spacious; if it is light, well-ventilated, properly warmed in cold weather, and has a pleasant location; if, still further, it contains within its walls specimens of art and beauty, — engravings, paintings, sculpture, flowers, and the like, — much is gained towards reconciling him to the various requirements of school. After a while, however, these influences lose a portion of their power. The young of the human race live on novelty. The expedient of to-day must give place to a new means of excitement to-morrow. Some form of indulgence, privilege, or distinction, must now be inaugurated. What shall it be? In some shape or other, it is a *reward*. No matter in what it consists: a picture — a ticket of approbation — a “merit;” they all come to the same point; all appeal to the child’s love of approbation.

There are persons, of large experience as teachers, who disapprove of this, who denounce the use of emulation, condemn school prizes, and profess to use no means for exciting the ambition of their pupils; but who, by a simple system of weekly reports of the deportment, character of lessons, &c., sent to the pupils’ homes, produce the highest degree of mental excitement, — in some cases to the sacrifice of health.

I cannot see the distinction between one of these modes of excitement and the other. Both induce to effort, and both may be abused. Discretion is required in either case; but it is not for him who resorts to one method to secure his object, to condemn him who prefers another.

At home, the mother’s kiss, the father’s smile of approval, his cordial shake of the hand, accompanied by the word of encouragement — these may take the place of the *tangible* reward. They are, in fact, equally real and effective. They address themselves, in like manner and with similar force, to a motive ever rife in the mind of man, — a motive placed within him to be used, not crushed, — a motive which has led to the most heroic and magnanimous achievements recorded

on the page of history. It is *the desire of praise*, the hope of reward or personal benefit, in some expressive form. Tell me, if you can, where it does not exist, where it is not felt, encouraged and nourished. The mother cherishes it as she breathes the flattering word into the infant's ear while he frolics on her lap; that infant bears its impression in every step of his progress towards manhood. At home and at school, throughout his college course, he is under its influence; beyond that, in the maturity of manhood, in his second and third degrees; in all his promotions; in his titles of professional life; in his official positions; in his deeds of humanity, of daring, and of self-sacrifice. He rescues a human being from destruction; he emancipates an enslaved people; he introduces a means of meliorating human suffering; he discovers an antidote to disease; he invents a magnetic telegraph; describes a new planet; brings down the sun to paint his pictures; — all these are followed by appropriate rewards: rewards bestowed by teachers of every grade; by humane societies; by learned professors; by academic governors; by grave councils; by the executives of states; by kings, queens, and emperors. And can all these be wrong? Why, among all the enlightened nations of antiquity, were statues set up, mausoleums built, and monuments erected in memory, or to the honor of, good or great men? Why have godly men even yearned for the glories of martyrdom? Is this desire for fame, — for an immortal name, — so universally felt, to be scorned or ignored? Did not the great Founder of Christianity, “for *the joy set before him*, endure the cross, despising the shame”? Did he not promise the inheritance of heaven to the pure, the humble, the benevolent, the obedient among all nations?

It seems, then, that throughout all time, *personal advantage* — real or imaginary — has been at the bottom, has been the motive, the pole-star of the good and the great, as well as of the obscure among men. Of course, good results, beyond those of a personal nature, were expected, in most cases, to supervene; and many a one has been unconscious of the influence that stirred him in his noble work. Still that influence was the motive power.

Why, then, denounce the use of an agency so efficient for the mind's highest good; and that, too, in a department of human labor in which all proper appliances and aids are so much needed?

I do not mean to affirm that no conceivable collection of young persons can be educated without a resort to stimulants like those adverted to; but only to say that, as a general rule, rewards are indispensable to the attainment of our wishes in school. A limited number of children, of docile dispositions and unexcitable tempera-

ments, selected from well-ordered families, — particularly those not over-anxious for rapid school advancement and the development of precocious mental powers, — might succeed very satisfactorily, with little or no application of extraneous motives. So some young ladies, enjoying the example of enlightened and highly cultivated mothers, may be found, during the school-going age, to have so far risen above the need of ordinary stimulants as to look upon them with indifference, — having attained to that state of mind in which other considerations preponderate. Such cases I have known, and cheerfully acknowledge; but this does not invalidate the argument, nor induce us to pronounce useless — far less hurtful — the application of rewards, in some form, to schools as they commonly exist around us. Rewards are *needed* to rouse the torpid; to excite the sluggish; to vitalize the inert; to interest the indifferent; to appease the passionate; to persuade the obstinate; to render docile the intractable.

Very few exceptions to the universality of the rule exist; and even where they are supposed to exist, the *spirit* of the rule is there, and its influence is *felt* in full operation!

There is one institution\* in the country, ostensibly acting independently of this universal motive; and the government of it proceed on the theory of the absence of all rewards and all penalties. They appeal to the sense of propriety, duty, honor, in the students; and the appeal, it is said, is seldom made in vain. The thought is grand, and the result must be elevating and ennobling, if it can be infallibly carried out. But what are the circumstances of this seminary? The students are of the usual college-going age as found in the West, — older than those of the long-settled parts of the country, — comprising both young men and young women, to whom instruction, beyond the elements, is considered a privilege and a boon; persons resolved to make the most of their opportunities, which they feel to be precious, and to which they devote a portion of their lives, that is measured, in their geometry, by *dollars* and by *ingots*. Hence, the frivolities which attach to the students of most other collegiate institutions, present slight attraction to them. The interest which is exerted in them by the peculiarities of their position, overcomes or holds in check many temptations; and even indolence — that almost unconquerable bane to progress — is mastered.

But even this institution admits, practically, the propriety or necessity of the universal law, by conferring degrees on its graduates. Not only so, but it refuses to give a diploma to any individual, —

\* Antioch College at Yellow Springs, Ohio — Horace Mann, president.

whatever may be his or her classical or scientific attainments, — unless the moral character be good. This plan receives my hearty approval, and deserves to be copied by every institution throughout the land, which confers degrees. Honor to the man or the government that originated it, and still more honor to those who have firmness enough to carry it into practice. But let it be observed that the *reward* is still at the foundation of it, and must, mainly, be the cynosure that guides the student through his whole college career.

Is it said that the *moral* character only is affected by this? If this be granted, still our principle obtains: The *reward* does the work; and one might as well expect to create a world as to eject this motive-power from the human soul, or to crush out its never-ceasing operations. But let it be remembered that while purity of life, a consciousness of moral obligation, and allegiance to the claims of duty, are the practical motives to the student, he will rarely fail in that fidelity to the claims of his class, which results in good scholarship, and which, in other seminaries, is followed by distinguished rank; and, beyond the years of college-life, will give him position in the world, whether he wear the minor honors of his Alma Mater or not.

That the young in many schools may be, and often are, overstimulated, I admit and lament. It is, unquestionably, the fault of the age, and owes its origin quite as much to the *home department* as to the school. But the abuse of a thing by no means proves that the thing itself should be repudiated. As well might one wish to annihilate the sun, by which all nature, animate and inanimate, is cheered, invigorated, fostered, matured and blest, — because, sometimes, under its meridian beam, a human being is prostrated, or, in the absence of accustomed moisture, the harvests of the husbandman are cut off, and the parched earth threatens a district of country with famine. As well might we say, let the winds be pent up in eternal caves, — although the life and health of man depend upon their action, — because a gale sometimes wrecks our ships, destroys our property, and drowns the voyager in the ocean depths. There is, in the course of events, to individuals no unmixed good. In the great, all-embracing scheme of Providence, the good greatly preponderates; and while a moderate amount of what, to our limited intelligence, appears evil, is permitted, could we survey the complete arrangement of the All-wise, with an unclouded vision, unbiassed by selfish considerations, we should be ready to admit now — as the Creator “saw” in the beginning — that “*all is good.*”

It is not denied that this *feeling* — so to call it — may be perverted, as may every propensity in man's nature; and, hence, reason

has been given to regulate and guide him. This does not, however, change the nature of the question, nor call upon us to denounce the principle. It merely requires that our best discretion should be exercised in the use of it.

I am well aware that the distribution of school medals, or other prizes, wherein competition or rivalry is most actively engaged, has been the main cause of the earnest opposition to the prize system ; and I grant that, so far as relates to schools, the utmost caution should be employed in the bestowment. Where a limited number of these prizes is to be contended for, emulation is often excited to its highest pitch, and serious consequences sometimes attend the awards. It does not follow, however, that emulation is to have no part in stimulating to effort. This would be condemning the wisdom of the Great Giver of the human mind, with all its motives, impulses and desires. It rather shows us the necessity and duty of training those under our charge to overcome or regulate their selfishness, to look with a generous sympathy upon a successful rival, and, having done what they could to secure the prize, congratulate the winner on his victory, and apply themselves, with renewed diligence, to another trial. We should direct them to look out upon the world, where competition exists in every form ; not only at the tournament, in the race, the combat, the wrestle, — but at the forum, on the mart of trade, in the studio of the artist, in the observatory of the astronomer, by the midnight lamp of the poet, the historian and the philosopher. All cannot win, but all can “try again ;” can “learn to labor and to wait” the result of a second trial ; — nay, to endure, if it must be so, another defeat. The prize that *man* can bestow is not the greatest good of life. There will be found some other and some higher boon. The fault is in him who repines, rather than in the system that bestows prizes on the most skilful or meritorious. What incessant moanings would fill the air of all populous regions of the world, if the unsuccessful aspirants for honors, place or wealth, should give audible expression to disappointed feeling, as their more fortunate neighbors present themselves to their sight, or to the eye of their imaginations ! No doubt suffering, to some extent, is endured, both in and out of school, from contemplating, at one view, one’s own failures and another’s success. But is it not self-inflicted ? Cannot its first approach be repelled by a little reflection of the well-balanced mind ? And are not self-inspection, self-discipline, and self-control, as important departments of early education and culture, as any to which a parent or a teacher may apply himself ?

There are those who not only condemn the whole system of school



rewards, but who denounce, in no measured terms, the act of our country's wisest philosopher, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN, for making provision in his will for a yearly distribution of medals to the most deserving pupils of the public schools of his native town, where his active mind received its first school-instruction.

He says, in his will devising the legacy : " I was born in Boston, New England, and owe my first instructions in literature to the free Grammar Schools established there. I therefore give one hundred pounds sterling to my executors, to be by them, the survivors or survivor of them, paid over to the managers or directors of the free schools in my native town of Boston, to be by them, or those persons or person who shall have the superintendence and management of the said schools, put out to interest, and so continued at interest forever ; which interest annually shall be laid out in silver medals, and given as honorary rewards, annually, by the directors of the said free schools, for the encouragement of scholarship in the said schools belonging to the said town, in such manner as to the discretion of the selectmen of the said town shall seem meet."

This donation, and another for the encouragement of industrious young mechanics, were " gratefully accepted " at a public town-meeting, held in Faneuil Hall ; and a committee, appointed by the meeting, subsequently reported that, " Every step to carry into full effect his [Franklin's] benevolent plan will be cheerfully pursued by those whom he was pleased to constitute his trustees, and rising generations will for ages bless the name of their illustrious friend and benefactor."

The beneficial effects of the Franklin donation have often been acknowledged by those familiar with the Boston public schools ; and the following remarks on this point were made by Mayor A. H. Rice, chairman *ex-officio* of the schools, at the inauguration of the Franklin Statue, September 17, 1856 :

" Among the recipients of these tokens have been many who obtained honorable distinction in after-life, and thus fulfilled the promise which attended the success of their first intellectual efforts ; and how many others have been led to positions of usefulness and honor, who might have fallen far below their actual attainments, without the stimulus which these little mementos have afforded, can be estimated best by those who appreciate that common attribute of our nature, which, especially in the young, requires something more than the consciousness of accomplished duty as an incentive to protracted exertion. How full of deep suggestion and touching pathos is the spectacle which has been exhibited to-day, of the recipients of these honorable tokens, marching in lengthened column, section after

section, year by year, in consecutive generations, covering more than the ordinary life of man, each one adorned by the trophy of his youthful toil, and bearing before the image of his benefactor a life-long tribute of veneration and gratitude ! ”

As no provision had been made in Franklin's will for medals for girls, the Boston school committee, in 1821, voted an extension of the plan, so that the girls in the Grammar Schools might be included in the distinction ; and they have annually, since that time, with the exception of the year 1847, received medals denominated “ City Medals,” *for good behavior and scholarship.*

The Franklin medals have been distributed to boys — three to six in a school — from 1792 to the present time ; and have been of incalculable service to these large and popular institutions, in awakening and keeping alive a desire to excel, and stimulating the pupils to effort. Great care is taken to have them awarded according to desert, and seldom has there been any cause to complain of injustice. It has often been difficult to decide between the claims of two candidates of apparently equal merit, and in such cases both have usually become recipients. With the infirmities that attach to human beings, it is not certain that perfect justice has invariably been done to candidates ; but no pains have been spared to avoid injustice. In some few instances, sensitive minds, it is affirmed, have been deeply wounded ; but this generally arose as much from the keenness of their sensibility, as from any defect in the system of distribution, or mistake in the decision of the judges. And are not parents in some measure responsible for this weakness in their offspring ? Should they not, from an early period of life, train them to habits of mental endurance, and thus fit them, by all of intellectual vigor that they can develop or infuse into them, for the struggles that await them ?

Original differences exist, it is true ; but is it not equally true that circumstances modify the mental, as well as the physical character of individuals ?

The great sagacity, shrewdness of observation, and familiarity with the operation of human motives, possessed by Dr. Franklin, would seem to be a sufficient guaranty of the propriety and safety of the use of these incitements to duty in school. By the consent of the nations, he has been considered as one of the great lights of the world in modern times. He stood as an arbiter of the destiny of his country in its great day of peril. He aided in leading her out of her darkness and poverty in her hour of need, and conducted her to light and liberty. His maxims are held as oracular wherever the English language is spoken, and comprise a safe and

almost complete manual for the conduct of affairs in every station in life.

If endorsers of the propriety of Franklin's gift were wanted, they could be found in multitudes among the members of the "Franklin Medal Association," with its gifted president\* at their head; whose views on the subject have recently been given to the citizens of Boston and Philadelphia, — in his admirable address on "Franklin, as a Boston Boy," — prepared for the anniversary of the doctor's birthday, the present year; which views were essentially the same as have been unfolded in this letter, and which the writer has held for nearly half a century.

The mode and conditions of the distribution of medals in schools admits, I think, of modification, by which their benefit would be augmented, and the objections to them obviated. Medals and other rewards have been awarded annually at the school with which I was connected, from the time of its establishment, in 1828, to the present day, and continue to form a part of its machinery of discipline; and, in thirty years, I am not aware that they ever occasioned a tear to fall, or the slightest unhappiness to be felt; — the cause of which, probably, is the fact that there was no individual competition connected with their acquisition.

There were several grades of these medals, which were bestowed as a matter of contract, the evidence of which every pupil had in his own possession, in his weekly reports, and by which he could claim, as on a note of hand. He was told, at the beginning of the year, that if he should be constant and punctual in his attendance at school to its close, — if he committed no misdemeanor — "deviation" as it was called — or infraction of school-laws, he should receive a silver medal of a certain grade; — this, irrespective of scholarship; and hence, giving that prominence to good behavior, to which it is ever entitled in the fitness of things, and encouraging every grade of mind to effort. If he was, as above, correct in deportment, punctual, and constant in attendance, and had but few deficiencies in lessons, &c., he would receive a silver medal of a higher grade. If his merits were still more obvious, and his lessons *generally* perfect, the highest silver medal was awarded him. If wholly without fault in these particulars, adding thereto entirely perfect lessons for the time, he should receive a gold medal. And these were bestowed, at the Annual Exhibition at the end of the year, to all — few or many — that complied with the terms. The grades of the medals have recently been increased in

\* Hon. Edward Everett.

number, to six in all — gold and silver — to make them more equitable, according to the amount of school-labor performed. Thus, perfect deportment and perfect lessons in the English department are entitled to a gold medal ; but these, with the addition of the successful study of one more language, claim a higher reward, or gold medal of superior value ; which the super-addition of two or more languages successfully pursued, raises to a claim for a gold medal of the highest grade of all.

This system has proved to be a very efficient instrument in the promotion of order, diligence, self-control, good-humor and good manners. A satisfactory degree of zeal has been enkindled, and is perhaps kept alive in the pupils' minds by personal considerations, — although the *hope of reward* is seldom, if ever, adverted to by the teachers, — they appealing, on all proper occasions, to the highest motives for manly effort.

The present condition of this school may not be considered as conclusive proof of the propriety or success of this system of rewards ; but it may not be amiss to state the fact that, although the school is private, unendowed, and unincorporated, and is over thirty years of age, it has flourished from the beginning, and never more than now, — having an excellent corps of (nine) teachers, and upwards of two hundred pupils in its ranks.

Finally, until the human mind shall have undergone some radical change in its elements and operations, rewards will continue to be an essential means of exciting the young to the ready and cheerful performance of duty.

There is another subject which has recently attracted much attention among the friends of schools and other philanthropists ; most of whom have, as I think, indulged in a one-sided view of it. And these are the same individuals who condemn the use of school-rewards. With an occasional exception, they are men of *theory*, who look at the matter through the optics of their sympathies and benevolence, — and this from their closets ; having little or no practical acquaintance with the supposed evil they deplore. Otherwise, they would receive with distrust the representations derived from partial sources, or made by incompetent judges. This is an error into which a zeal for reform often leads its votaries — driving them to unreasonable extremes. Many persons, under such circumstances, with an honest purpose and noble enthusiasm, — forgetting that “one swallow does not make a summer,” — take for granted that, a single pupil having been injured, or *reported* to have been so, by excessive study, — while five hundred

pupils escaped unharmed, under the same course, — the whole system of school-lessons, and especially if learnt out of school, is and must be wrong, and should be condemned and universally discarded.

It is, however, a remarkable fact, that few *teachers* of experience and judgment, give any practical heed to the attempts of these so-called reformers. Being in “*loco parentis*” to their pupils, they feel their responsibility, and are guided by their knowledge and their consciences, in the treatment of the individuals of their charge. If they were to discover that the children were suffering from excessive application, they would, doubtless, be the first to apply the remedy. Of this I can speak from personal knowledge; and am willing to affirm that, in one institution at least, the amount of out-of-school study was limited to an extent that could not injure the student; while a standing rule existed, both in school and out, prohibiting all labor on lessons, the moment that the eyes began to suffer, or the head or brain to ache. Nor can an instance be recalled, in which these evils or affections of the nerves were induced by excessive study, with the consent of the teachers. Mistakes may sometimes occur; no doubt they have occurred, and will happen again; but I have the most implicit belief that, as a general thing, teachers of schools feel a tender regard for their pupils, are desirous of their welfare, and watchful of whatever pertains to the health of their bodies as well as the improvement of their minds.

Builders of school-houses, at the present time, are solicitous that these structures should be arranged on the most philosophical principles, — to promote the health and comfort of those who are to occupy them, — in the matters of ventilation, the proper degree of heat, commodious desks, chairs, &c.; while the public supervisors are watchful to carry out the contemplated plans. At no time in the history of the country has so much been done, in nearly all the States in the Union, to promote the comfort of children in schools, as now. For these reasons I have been induced to offer these remarks, as a reply in part to complaints, which, unnoticed, might be thought, by those who should not investigate the charges, to be well founded, as against a universal evil in the schools. And, still further, I wish to avail myself of this opportunity of presenting to the readers of the *Journal* the following sensible extract from the Annual Report, for 1858, of the present Principal of Chauncy-Hall School; in which the subject under discussion is judiciously treated, and suggestions made, which, if adopted in practice, would probably cause the evils referred to, to disappear from the land, while an incalculable good to all ages and classes of persons would be introduced among us. I cheerfully en-

dorse every sentiment in it, and recommend its perusal to every parent under whose eye it may fall.

"The danger of overtaking the young mind and body by our present systems of education, has formed an exciting topic of discussion in our community, during the past year, and a few remarks upon it may not be inappropriate here. It is difficult to speak of what is done in other schools, or to judge of the effect of systems and arrangements, of which the direct working is not seen; but a few facts and deductions from personal reminiscence and experience, may throw some light on the subject.

"If confinement is one of the elements injurious to the pupil's health, there has been a great change effected in his favor during the last twenty years. The vacations have expanded from about four weeks to eight, nine, and, in the private schools for girls, to thirteen or fourteen weeks. Instead of protracting his studies far into the dog-days of August, the scholar may be sent to enjoy the renovating influences of the country in the month of July. Single holidays are much more numerous, both stated and occasional, giving pleasant respite from toil. School hours, too, have been essentially shortened; formerly seven hours a day were devoted to school in summer, while five or five and a half are now the limit. Nor is it a fact that so much more is accomplished or attempted either in or out of school, as has been frequently asserted, and is, perhaps, generally believed. Scholarship existed twenty years ago, and scholarship did not come without labor both in and out of school. It was not supposed that any valuable mental acquisitions could be made without working for them. The Latin and Greek Grammars had to be mastered, and about the same amount of preparatory study gone through by the boy who was intended for a collegiate education. At a somewhat earlier period, between the years 1820 and 1830, it was customary for many of the pupils of the Latin School in this city, to attend private intermediate schools between the morning and afternoon sessions, in order to give more attention to Writing, Spelling, Reading, &c., than the course at the public institution permitted. The writer well remembers rushing in hot haste from the old Latin School-house in School-street to the neighboring shades of Harvard Hall, to spend two additional hours; and never sees his venerated teachers of those days without internally thanking them for what they required him to do in this double process of school education. Many of the boys of that day still live to bear witness that they were not crushed by the labor, and, in fact, did not feel themselves particularly aggrieved by it. They, as well as their parents, accepted school and its requisitions as a sort of fate,

not to be struggled against or repined at. If the advantages were wanted, the price was to be paid.

"Boys were, undoubtedly, sick in those days, as they have always been, whether in school or out of school, in city or country; but their sicknesses were referred to natural causes. That there was less of a low and feeble state of the system, is probably a fact, for which abundant reasons exist in the modes of life and of bringing up children now prevalent. The popular error seems to lie in making school responsible for what results from other causes, and in supposing that health and vigor would exist if school and its requisitions were out of the way. Certainly some forms of life and occupation can be imagined that would give a higher degree of health and strength than any city or sedentary pursuit. But can these be obtained, as a general thing, by boys considered feeble or delicate, even supposing they had sufficient stamina to embrace them? Cut a boy off from school in a large city or its vicinity, and what is to become of him? He will be obliged to lounge listlessly at home the greater part of the time, absolutely suffering for healthy mental occupation; or, going abroad to seek companions or excitement, he is liable to form associations of the worst class, or to yield to the many temptations that present themselves on every side. Seldom will a greater amount of air and exercise be taken than might be enjoyed in connection with attendance at school; while habits of application and regularity may be irretrievably injured. It is to be hoped, therefore, that the parents of feeble children will try the other means in their power of improving their health, before depriving them of the great advantage of early training and instruction, and not continue in a permanent state of dissatisfaction with school, as if it were necessarily a hardship or deleterious influence. Before we can see a general and high state of health in our schools and universities, there must be a change in the habits of our community, and in nothing more than in the prevalent modes of bringing up children. The influences of climate, so much dwelt upon by medical writers, we shall have to bear. If we suffer from being an unacclimated race, it will take many generations to bring about a change; we can only resist its influences by such means as are in our power. More simplicity, more hardihood, more true manliness, are wanted in both young and old. Luxury and effeminacy are fast unstringing both the bodily and mental nerves of that portion of our people considered the most highly favored.

"Where circumstances do not compel the practice of self-denial, resolution and perseverance, to overcome the physical necessities of life, those stern teachers which have developed so many strong and



manly natures, education must aim at a similar result. Simplicity of food and clothing will have as favorable an effect upon the children of the rich, when enforced as a matter of principle, as if compulsory. The early hours and habits of steady labor of the children of toil, can be imitated by those who have the privilege of practising them in furtherance of the nobler object of gaining an education. Where the desire for play does not lead to habits of healthy exercise, it is the duty of parents to see that it is taken in some of those forms which even city life admits. The use of tobacco and other hurtful stimulants must not be learned. In fine, the body must be made to keep its place and do its work as a good servant, and not pampered and flattered till it leads the mind whithersoever it will, and compels it to do its bidding.

“In accomplishing these objects, parents will find, that, if they add example to precept, the effect will be greatly increased. It is of little use for a full-grown man to talk to a child of the importance of air and exercise, if he never stirs from the fireside or the desk. It is his part to lead the way in the good path. A father who takes his son to walk, to ride, to row, to swim, to skate, shows that he believes what he preaches, and is disposed to reap the benefits of exercise in his own person. So, too, in abstinence from injurious practices. It is of very little use to reprobate the habit of smoking, for instance, and yet set the example of it himself. It is one of the responsibilities of pater-nity, that cannot be shaken off or got over, to *do* the thing that we wish the child to *learn*. Anything short of this, so far as circumstances permit, is less than the duty of a father.

“These remarks are equally applicable to the weightier matters, affecting not merely the outward well-being, but the spiritual welfare of the child. He must be directly taught those things which lead to eternal life, and guided into the narrow path, by parental example. The channel of communication must be kept open, and the workings and tendencies of the young soul not suffered to hide themselves. The watchful parent will make himself acquainted with the good and evil tendencies of his child, and will make it his first duty to cultivate the one and restrain the other.”



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